NEW

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Chart the rise, rule and demise of an empire that shaped modern Europe

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FUTURE
FOURTH EDITION

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Forged by the iron will of Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Empire's birth in 800 CE signalled the beginning of a new era in a Europe that had been stumbling in the dark for centuries. By means of conquest, alliances and marriage, the continent's new power would come to encapsulate much of Western Europe, morphing into a disjointed network of states within which ruthless wars and reformations would be waged. But who where the empire's key figures? How did they rule? And why did this ambitious project ultimately fail? Turn the page to explore a realm that shaped Europe for over 1,000 years and left a legacy that still influences it today.

FUTURE

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

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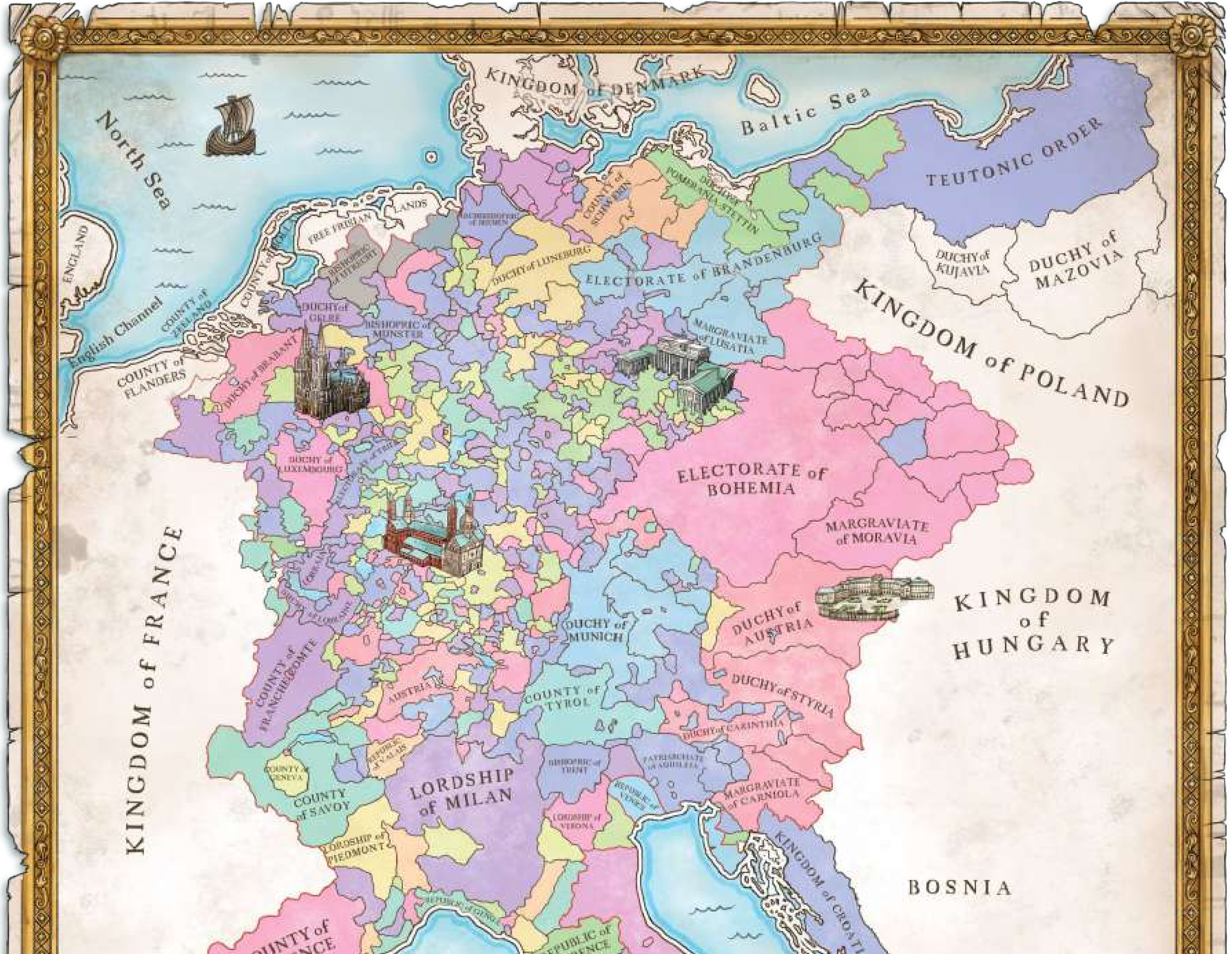
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TEUTONIC ORDER
DUCHY of POMERANIA-STETTIN
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ARCHBISHOPRIC of BREMEN
FREE FRISIAN LANDS
ENGLAND
English Channel
COUNTY of HOLLAND
COUNTY of ZEALAND
COUNTY of FLANDERS
BISHOPRIC of UTRECHT
DUCHY of LUNEBURG
ELECTORATE of BRANDENBURG
DUCHY of KUJAVIA
DUCHY of MAZOVIA
KINGDOM of POLAND
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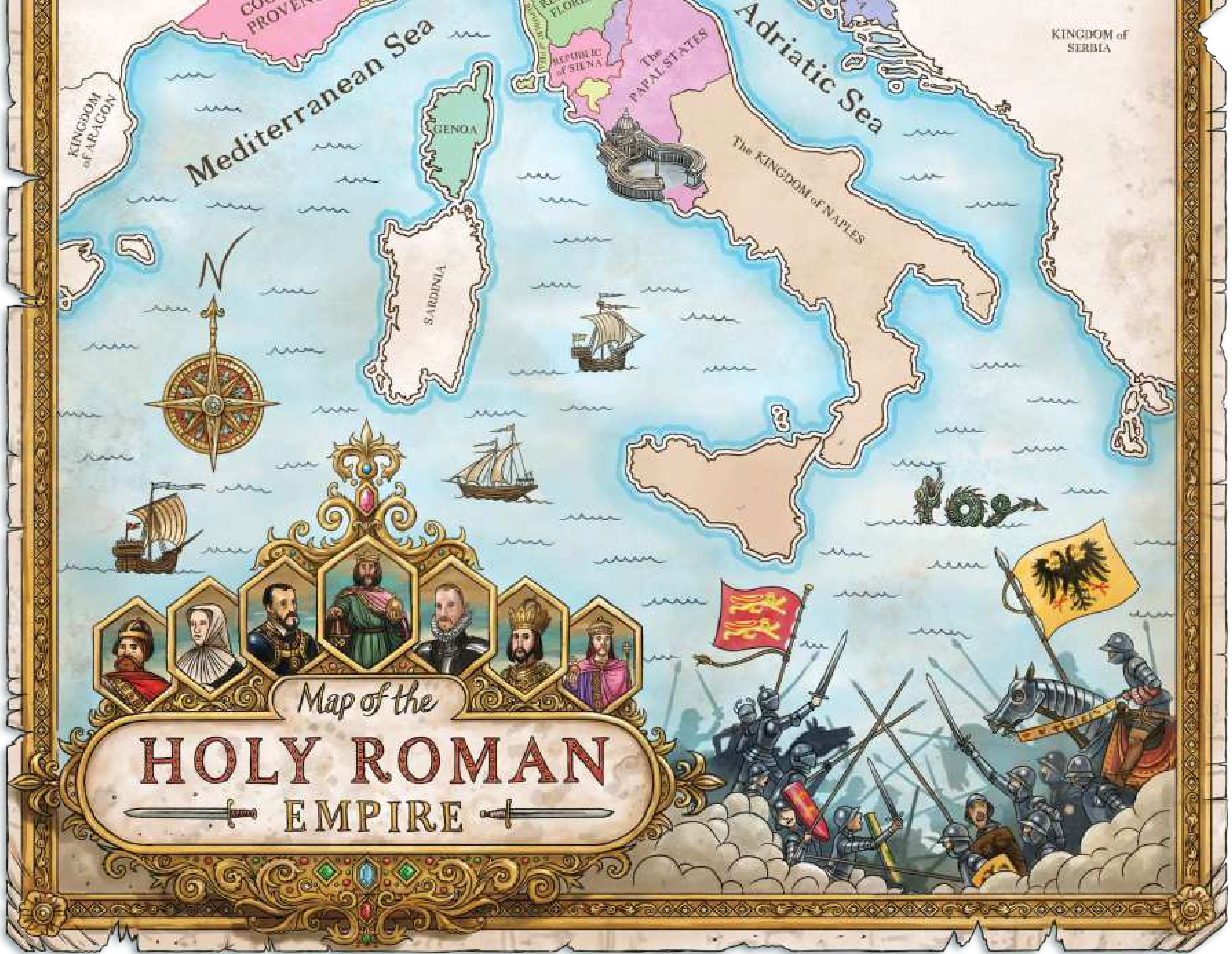
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Mediterranean Sea
GENOA
SARDINIA
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Map of the
HOLY ROMAN
EMPIRE

FATHER OF EUROPE

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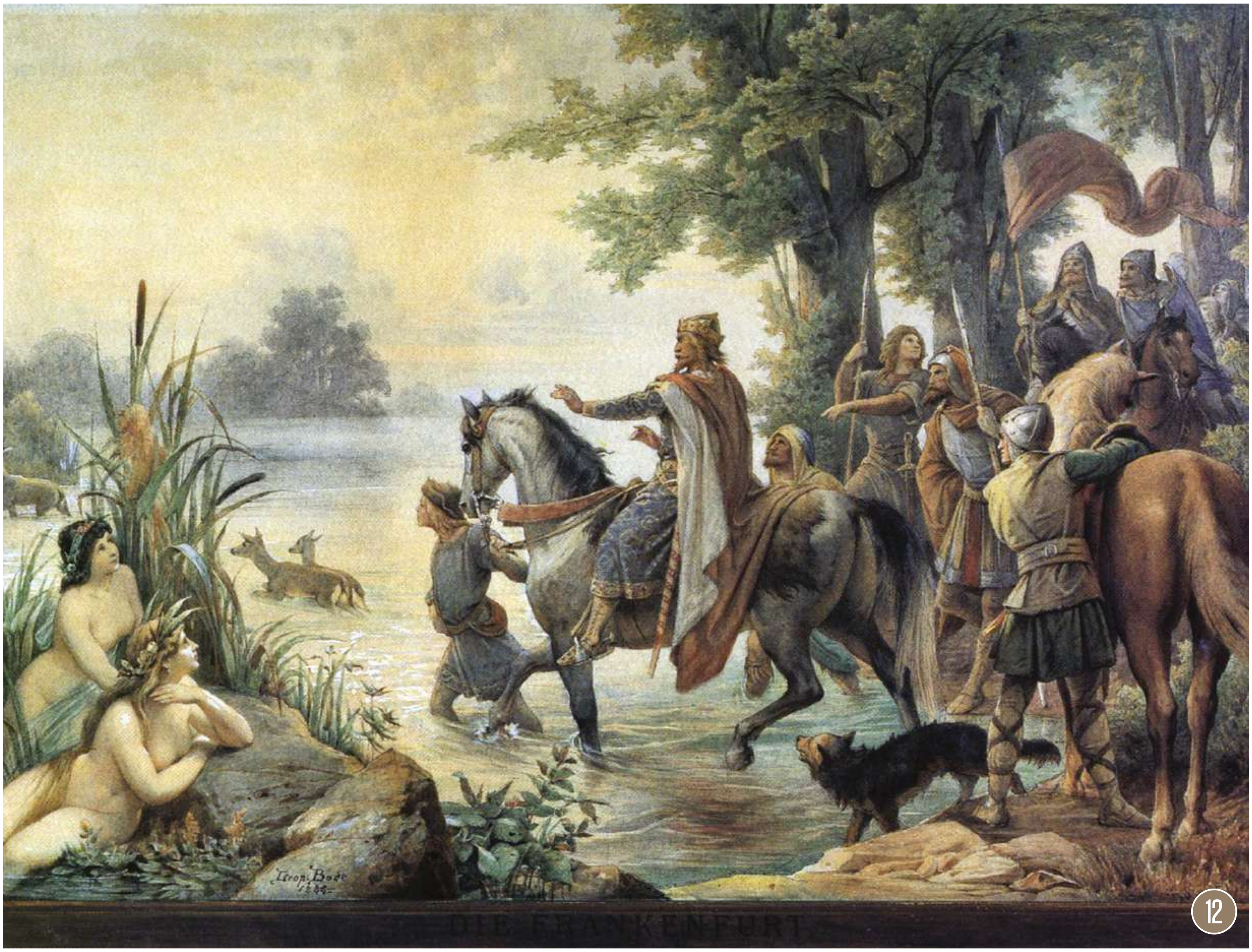
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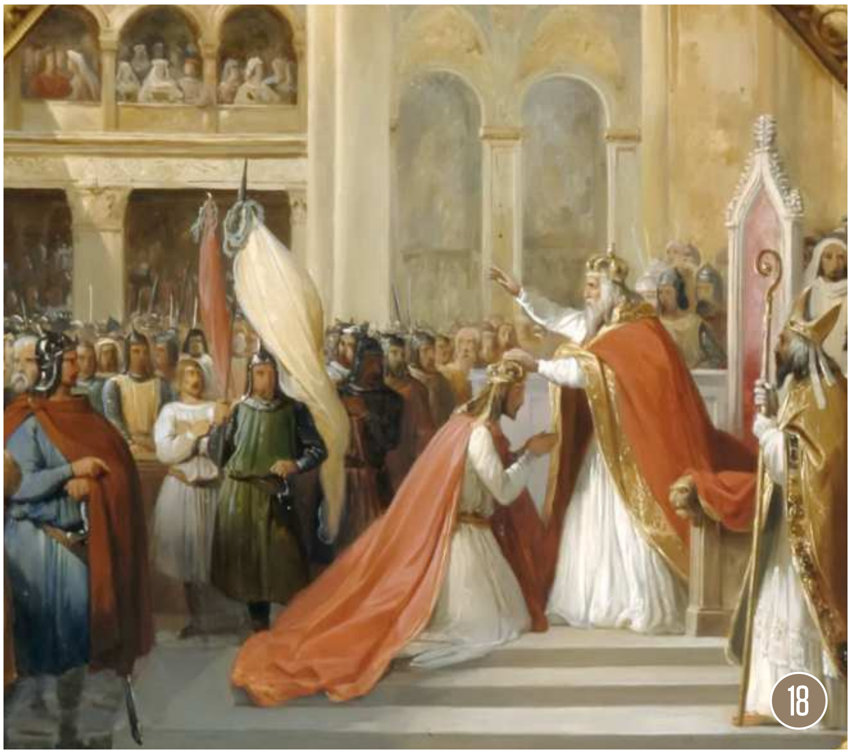

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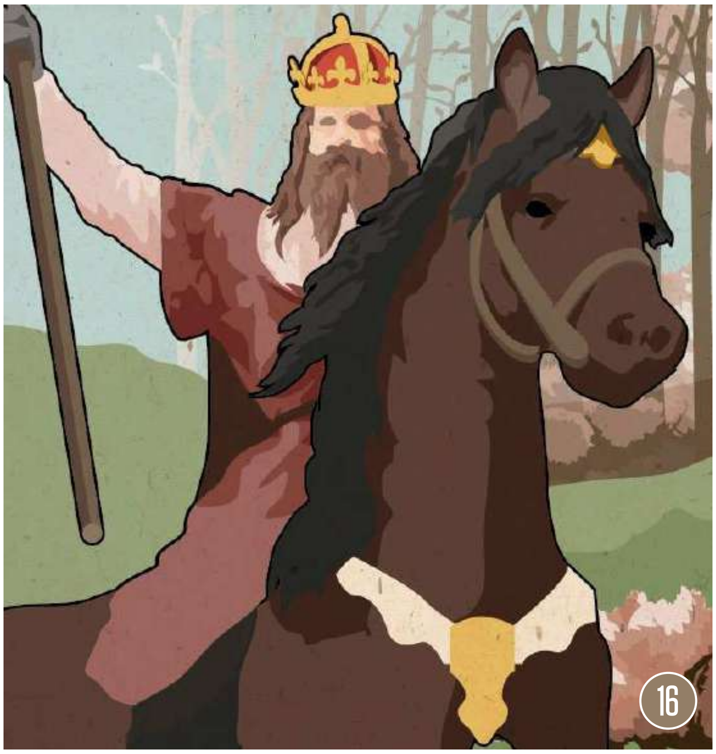

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742–814 CE

CHARLEMAGNE

The 'father of Europe' and ruler of much of France and Germany, Charlemagne made his name as a king, but he left a legacy as an emperor who reforged a continent

For over 300 years Europe had been shrouded in darkness. With the power of the pope waning and the once-mighty Roman church beset by enemies on all sides, the legacy of the Western Roman Empire toppled as steadily and as surely as the Caesars had themselves, stability withdrawing like overstretched legionnaires and knowledge fading away like the crumbling Roman roads that cross-hatched the continent.

Europe needed a strong leader to pull it back from the precipice, and it got a brace of them in the form of the Carolingian dynasty, a family of self-made kings who stabilised their lands by force, expanded their frontiers with terrifying aggression and ensured the primacy of the Christian church at the point of the sword. Yet from this crucible of violence emerged a Western Europe that would survive for another 1,000 years.

By the 6th century, most of what is now France, western Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium was inhabited by the Franks, a Germanic tribe split into several small kingdoms that had rushed into the power vacuum left by the fall of Rome. These petty principalities had been united not by their monarch - rulers in name only, the rois fainéants, the 'do-nothing kings' of the Merovingian dynasty, had been increasingly sidelined by their own ministers - but by the Mayor of the Palace, the executive of the royal administration who was half prime minister and half Shogun-esque warlord.

Pepin of Herstal had warred his way to stability between 680 CE and his death in 714 CE, bringing the other Frankish lands to heel and taking Christianity to their furthest and most pagan reaches. His son, Charles Martel, was a stronger hand yet. Though Pepin had nominated his grandson as successor, Charles - born out of wedlock and excluded from the court - was having none of it and took the not-quite-throne by force. Despite not being Pepin's choice of heir, he more than honoured his father's vision, expanding the centralised control of the Frankish lands and spreading his rule further into the modern-day Netherlands, Denmark and Germany with a standing army and revolutionary use of heavy cavalry, the foundation of Europe's knights.

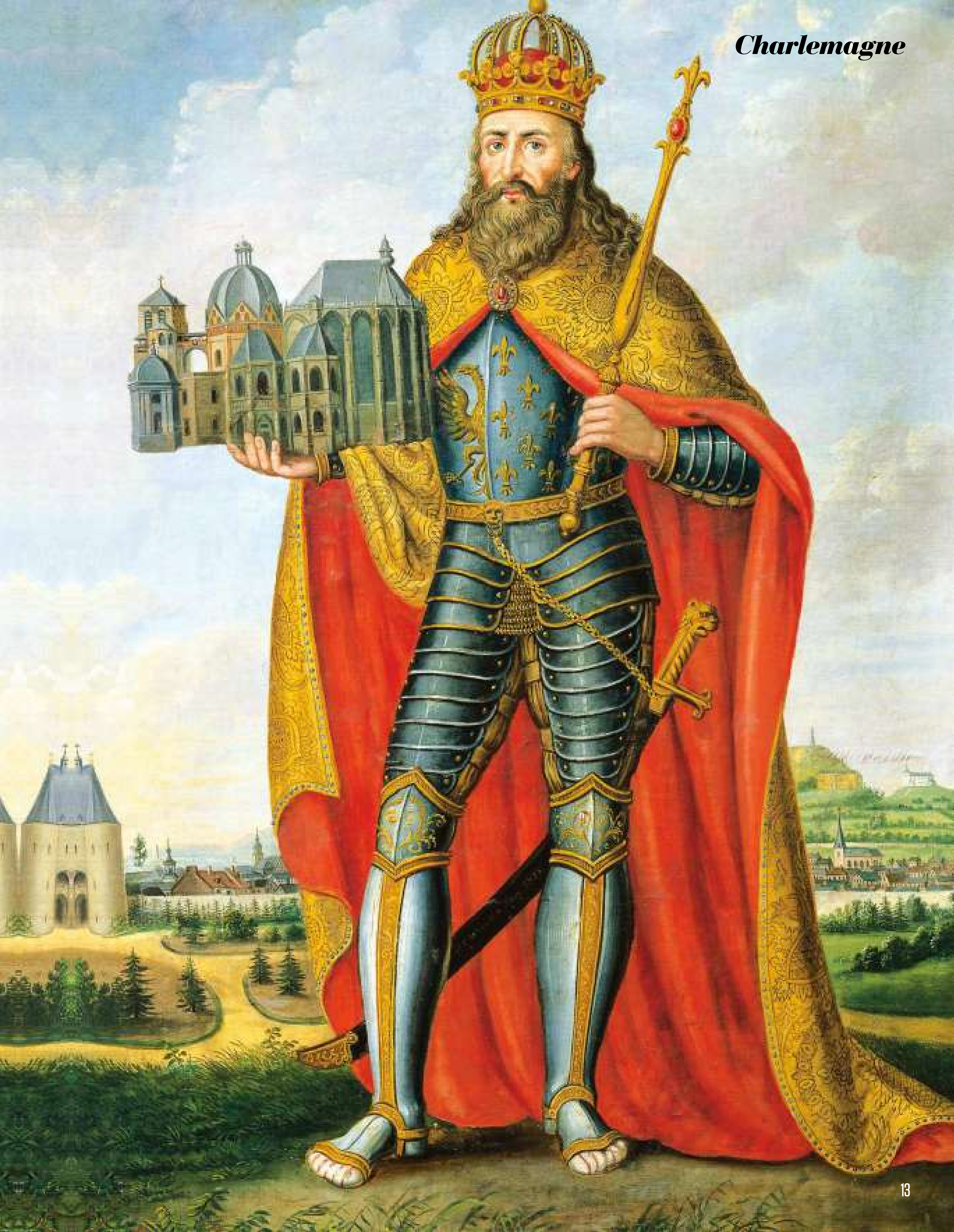
He also defeated the pagan Saxons in the east and halted the advance of the Moors - the North African and Spanish Muslims of the powerful Umayyad Caliphate - who attempted to follow up their conquest of Spain by pushing across the Pyrenees Mountains and on into France. 'Charles the Hammer' was even offered a position of high office by a grateful pope. Charles declined this offer,

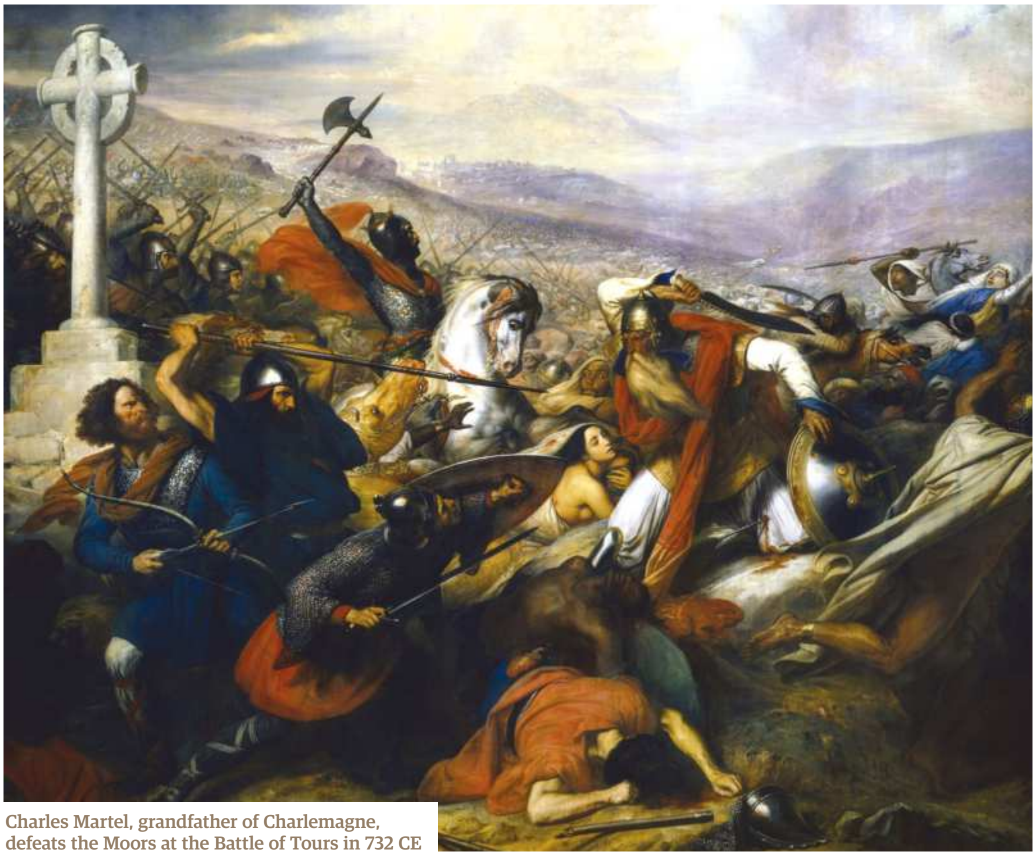
CHARLEMAGNE

Western Europe, 742-814 CE

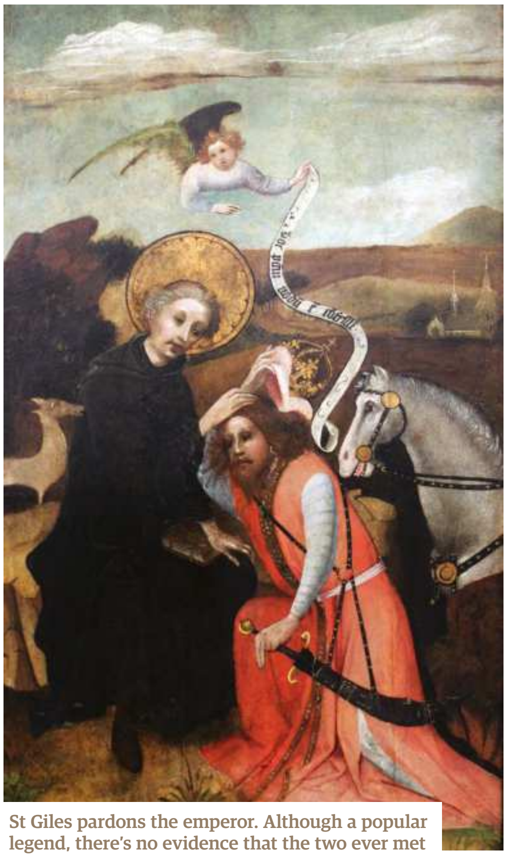
Brief Bio

Taking the throne of the Franks in 768, Charlemagne rose from a relatively humble background to a position of greatness. Adding King of Italy to his portfolio in 774, he eventually ruled all of continental Western Europe by the year 800. A pious man, his relationship with the Church increased his political power.





Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, defeats the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732 CE



St Giles pardons the emperor. Although a popular legend, there's no evidence that the two ever met

> "Charlemagne's journey from king to emperor has everything to do with the insecurity of the church"

but it was an omen of his grandson's own journey to come.

Succeeding his father Pepin the Short in 768 CE – who had given up the pretence of being anything other than supreme ruler by forcing the last Merovingian king into a monastery and taking the title of 'King of the Franks' for himself – Charlemagne, which means 'Charles the Great', shared the zeal of his predecessors. At war for most of his life, Charlemagne took Charles Martel's fight against the Moors into northern Spain, continued the conquest and conversion of the Saxons and launched new campaigns against the Lombards of northern Italy, the Slavs in Croatia and the Avars in Hungary.

Leading his personal guard, the scara cavalry, into battle with his sword, Joyeuse, Charlemagne's exploits have one armoured foot in myth and the other in fact, with separating the two being a difficult task, but his journey from king to the first Roman emperor since the fall of the Roman Empire has little to do with his legend as a warrior king and everything to do with the Church's insecurity.

Pope Leo III succeeded Adrian I on the day of the previous pontiff's burial, so fearful was he that the Frankish king to whom his predecessor owed his lands and safety would feel a right to interfere in the election of the new pope. Yet, despite his wariness, he was quick to bring Rome's most powerful ally on side; along with the letter that announced his succession, Leo included the keys to St Peter's Basilica and the pope's banner.

The not-so-subtle message was that he viewed Charlemagne as the defender of the Holy See and trusted him with Rome's protection. The Frank was equally magnanimous in return, congratulating the pontiff and sending vast riches (the spoils of his war against the Avars), but not without condition, suggesting that as he happened to be the stalwart defender of Christianity, the pope had a duty to pray for the Frankish armies as they continued their conquest. Charlemagne would honour his side of this implied bargain, and in return Leo elevated him to an office left vacant since the 5th century.

While Leo engaged in his letter-writing campaign with the monarch to the northwest and used the Avar loot to become a patron of the arts, the family of the late Adrian I launched a conspiracy to remove him from his post and replace him with his nephew Paschal the Primicerius.

On 25 April 799 CE, during the procession of The Greater Litanies through the Eternal City, Leo was attacked by armed thugs, who stabbed him in the eyes and attempted to tear out his tongue at the root. After dragging him to the church of San Silvestro in Capite and trying to gouge out his eyes again, the bloodied pope was left unconscious as a prisoner at the monastery of St Erasmus.

Accused of perjury and fornication by his rivals, the wounded – but amazingly not blinded or voiceless – Leo fled Rome to Spoleto, approximately 126 kilometres north of the city, where under the protection of the Duke of Spoleto he was able to make his way safely to Charlemagne at Paderborn in Saxony.

That such a loyal servant of the Frankish king could be found so close to Rome, deep within Italy's central Umbria region, neatly underlines the unbalanced relationship of power between the Franks and the Roman Catholic church that had initially caused Leo such anxiety.

Though the territory had been handed to Rome in 776 CE after the defeat of the Lombards, the king retained the power to choose the duke, making papal control as meaningless as that of the last Merovingian kings under Charlemagne's ancestors.

Clearly, the threat of political interference from Charlemagne had been trumped by that of actual bodily harm, and Leo begged for the monarch's aid. He had no authority to do so - neither he nor the conspirators in Rome were subjects of the Franks, and no law yet existed that would make bishops subordinate to secular authority. With conflict left in Saxony to pursue, Charlemagne let the matter stew for a year and kept the recovering pontiff as his guest. Finally heading to Rome in November 800 CE with a sizeable (and no doubt fairly threatening) entourage, Charlemagne summoned a council of the city's religious authorities and patiently listened to the accusations put to Leo before allowing the deposed pontiff to make an impassioned plea of innocence.

Unsurprisingly, Charlemagne took Leo's side and ordered the conspirators' executions, but Leo requested that they instead be exiled, with the unpopular pope perhaps seeing an opportunity to impress with his capacity for forgiveness.

Crowned 'Emperor of the Romans' on Christmas Day that same year by the grateful pope, the official report insists that Charlemagne was ambushed with some sort of early Medieval surprise party. The king's biographer, the monk Einhard, claimed that his liege had such "aversion [to being crowned Emperor] that he declared he would not have set foot in the church… if he could have foreseen the designs of the pope".

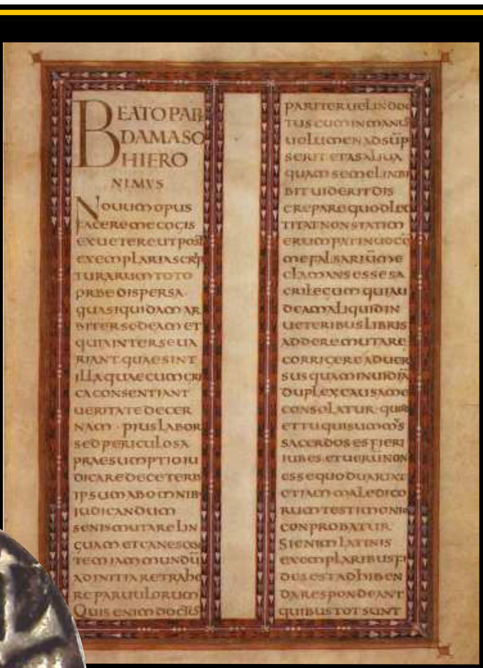
It's entirely possible that Charlemange and Leo came to some agreement. After all, the idea of grinning priests hiding a bejewelled imperial crown as if it were a birthday cake is too ludicrous to contemplate. Documents from his reign reveal that Charlemagne preferred using the title 'Charles, the most serene Augustus crowned by God, the great, peaceful Emperor ruling the Roman Empire' rather than the simpler and more often used 'Emperor of the Romans'. These aren't entirely the actions of someone with an aversion to the role, and the king's humility may have been as expertly stage-managed as Leo's mercy.

Nonetheless, with his rule over the Frankish lands uncontested and his empire secured through sheer military prowess, Charlemagne no more needed to declare himself Roman emperor than the fearsome Charles Martel needed to be king, but the vulnerable pope required an emperor to protect him and a vast empire with the church at its heart. Only Rome had nostalgia for its lost empire; the Franks held their 4th-century resistance to Roman rule, and their role in dismembering the Roman Empire, as a point of fierce pride.

Ultimately, though, the way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way in which he conducted his affairs, and the impact of his ascension - reluctant or willing - to Europe's highest office would take another 150 years to make itself fully known.

Birth of modern Europe

Three big ways in which Charlemagne changed the continent



01 Man of letters

Frustrated by his own difficulty in mastering the written word, Charlemagne rolled out a system of reforms on the very shape of writing, insisting on a double space to separate words, an indent at the start of a paragraph and punctuation marks to indicate where the reader should pause or stop. Question marks and lower-case letters also appeared.

02 Silver age

Due to a shortage of gold, Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxon King Offa standardised their currencies based on a pound of silver ('lira' in Latin) that was broken down into 20 sous, each of 12 deniers. This is the origin of many global currencies past and present, from the British pound to the Italian lira.

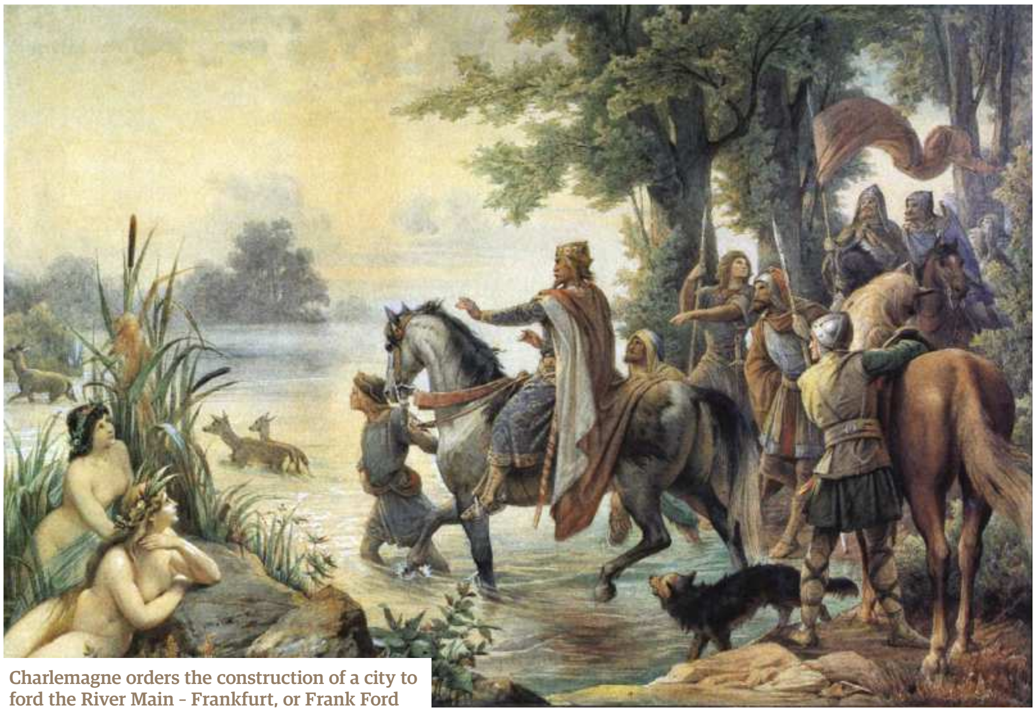
03 Out of the dark

Charlemagne's interest in the arts led to the Carolingian Renaissance, a flowering of art, literature, poetry and learning. The Dark Ages traditionally cover the 6th to 13th centuries, but for the Franks it was over before it began, and 90 per cent of surviving Roman manuscripts do so because monks copied them.

The first Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I, took the title in 962 CE and reinvented himself in the Frankish king's image, creating a powerful multi-ethnic state and a crown that would endure for over 1,000 years.

Through the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne's rule defined not just the primacy of France as one of Europe's imperial, religious and cultural superpowers but of numerous Austrian, German and Italian states too.

A career that began for Charlemagne as King of the Franks ended not just as emperor but also as the father of the Europe that we can still recognise today.



Charlemagne orders the construction of a city to ford the River Main - Frankfurt, or Frank Ford

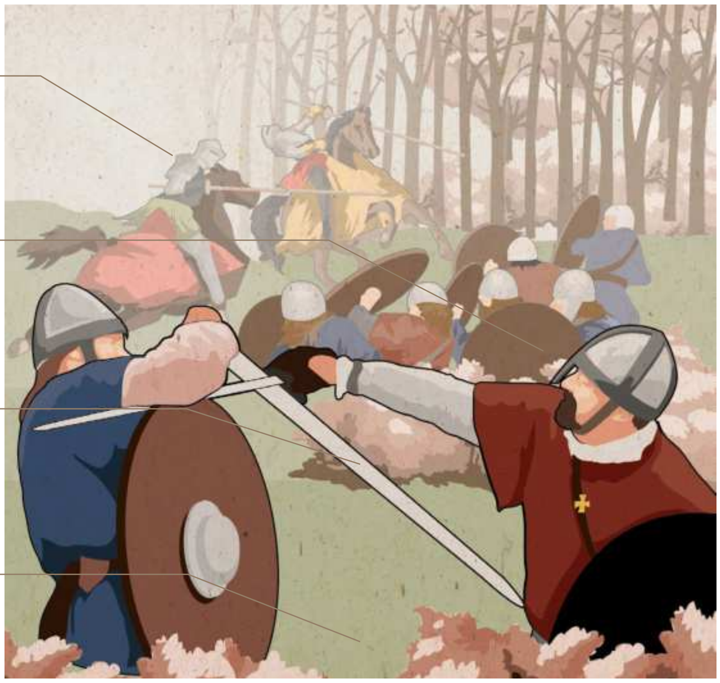
© Getty

How to CONQUER THE SAXONS

USE CHARLEMAGNE'S TACTICS TO CRUSH YOUR HEATHEN ENEMIES AND BUILD YOUR MAGNIFICENT EMPIRE SAXONY, 772-804

Charlemagne expanded his empire through a series of successful military campaigns, with his conquest of Saxony one of the most crucial. The ruler believed it was his duty to spread Christianity across Europe, but the Saxons continued to cross his borders to conduct raids on his lands, provoking his anger.

Charlemagne defeated a number of rebellions from those who resisted the conquest, led by the steadfast Saxon rebel leader Widukind. At the same time, he issued administrative reforms to bring Saxony into the Frankish Empire. In total, it took him over 30 years to fully consolidate his control over the region.



Frankish cavalry

Fast, highly skilled and armed with throwing spears, Charlemagne's cavalry quickly overpowered Saxons on the battlefield.

Rebel warriors

While the invading force were superior in a pitched battle, the Saxons employed insurgency tactics to resist Frankish occupation for years.

Matching arsenal

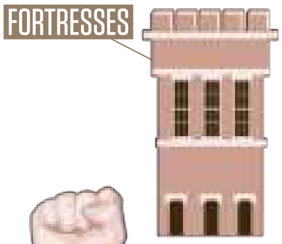
Though Charlemagne's troops were better trained, both sides carried similar weapons: long swords, round shields and spears.

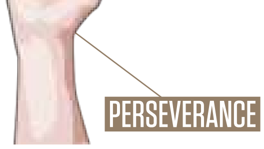
Continental conflict

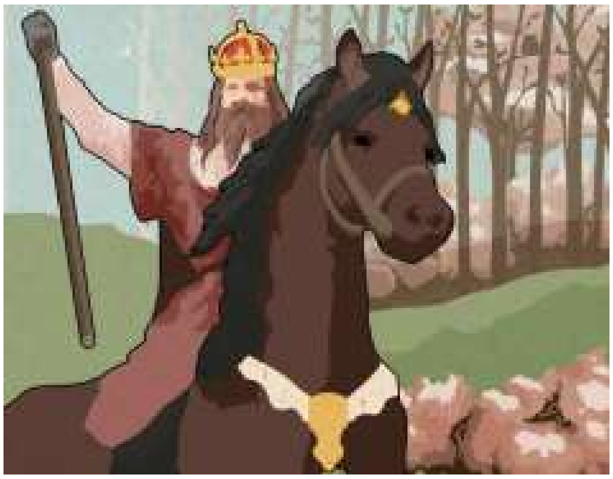
Not to be confused with the Anglo-Saxons of England, Charlemagne invaded continental Saxons who lived in northwestern Germany.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

CHRISTIANITY

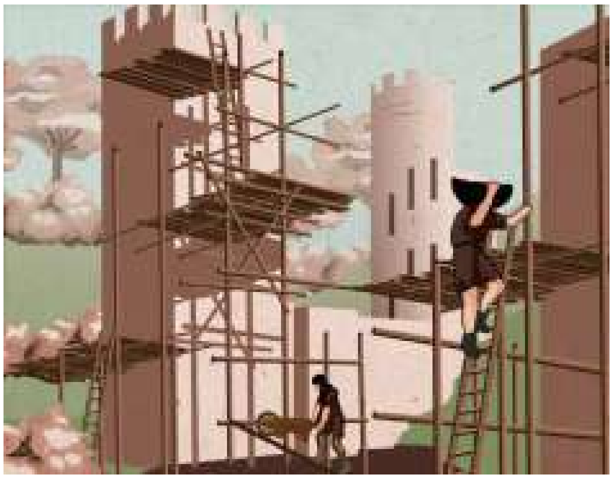






01 INVADE SAXON TERRITORY

In retaliation for a raiding party crossing your border to sack and burn a church in Deventer, march on Saxony in January 772. Bring as large an army as you can muster, so that you can quickly capture and subjugate the region of Engria. Once this is secured, use this as a base of operations while you continue your military campaign up to the Weser River.



02 PREPARE FOR THE LONG HAUL

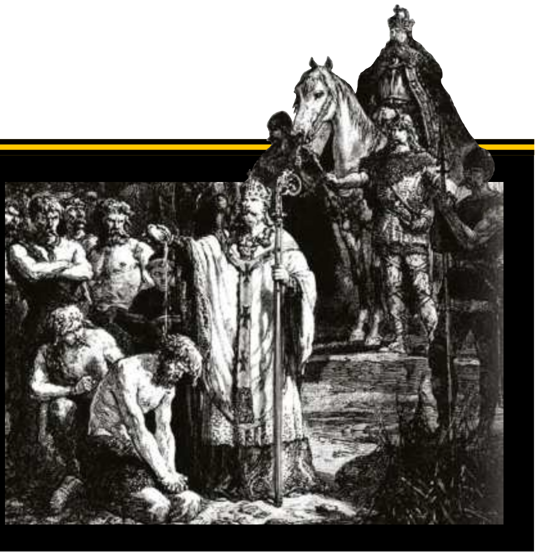
While the Carolingian force is militarily superior, the Saxons won't accept defeat easily – this campaign will take years to win. Take Saxon strongholds as you make your way through the territory as well as build your own fortresses, just as Charlemagne captured Ergesburg, the Saxons' largest refuge castle, in 772 and later established Karlstadt.

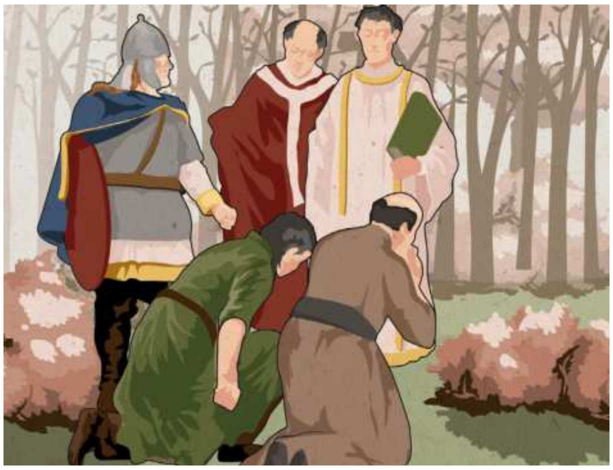
How not to... make the Saxon Wars drag out

Charlemagne was 24 when he first attacked the Saxons but he was 56 by the time the Saxon Wars ended, starting a French fashion for fighting long wars.

Part of the problem was that Charlemagne only campaigned intermittently. He would move through Saxony, defeating various tribes and securing their lands as he went, but he frequently became distracted by other conflicts, such as with Lombardy.

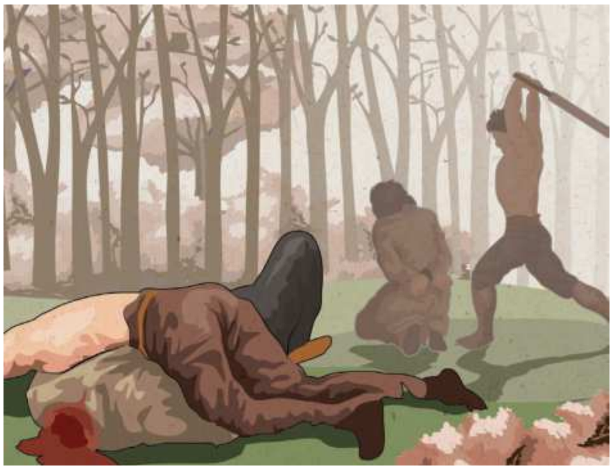
He left fortresses behind to maintain order during his absences, but the Saxons took advantage and raided them while he was gone. Charlemagne was then forced to return to squash the uprisings, forcing the Saxons to submit and convert to Christianity all over again, triggering a vicious cycle. If Charlemagne had remained focused on conquering Saxony, perhaps he could have conquered it a lot sooner.





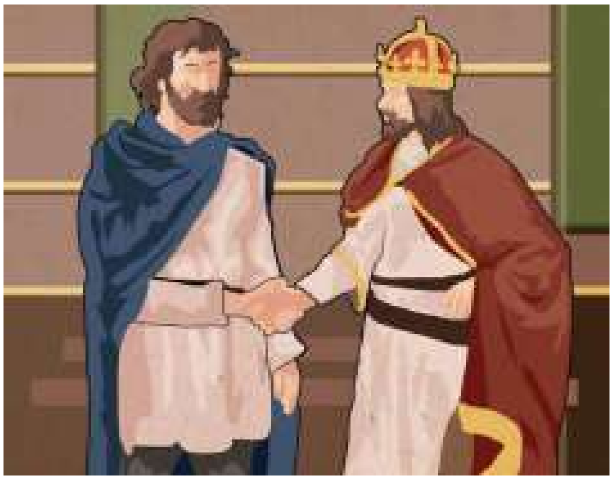
03 CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY

Insist that the Saxons become Christians. Charlemagne destroyed the pagans' sacred tree or pillar, the Irminsul, in Engria. He also routinely forced defeated rebel leaders to be baptised. This religious mission helped legitimise his conquest in the eyes of the Church while introducing a new faith further weakened the Saxon's traditional power structures.



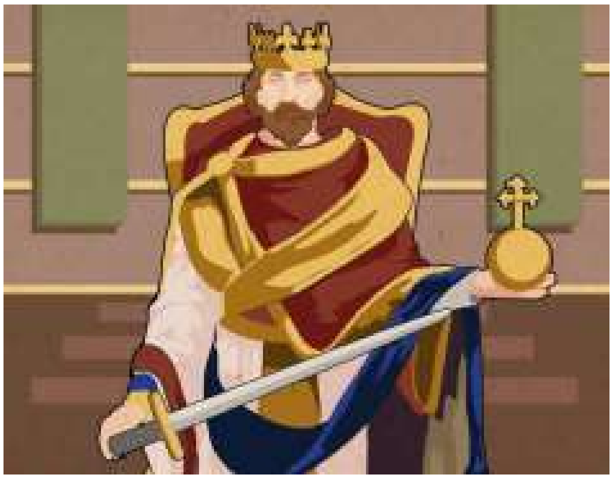
04 MASSACRE THE REBELS

Every time you think you've successfully conquered the Saxons, they will rise up again. Charlemagne found he had to grow ever more ruthless to suppress the rebels, shifting from taking a few aristocratic hostages in 772 to slaughtering 4,500 rebel prisoners of war in 785. Consider being merciless from the beginning to prove you mean business.



05 BUY A CHIEFTAIN'S ALLEGIANCE

When a Saxon leader agrees to be baptised, grant them land and a title. This will wed them to you financially while they act as your local enforcer. This worked so well for Charlemagne that the last Saxon uprising, the Stellinga in 841-845, was mainly put down by Saxon nobles.



06 PAX CAROLINGIA

With the rebels either dead or deported and the nobility in your pocket, you can finally breathe a sigh of relief. To cement your rule and integrate the Saxons into the empire, overhaul their statute books. The *Lex Saxonum* was a series of laws that recognised the Saxons' customs while removing pagan practices and proclaiming the rights of the Church.

4 Famous... ENEMIES OF CHARLEMAGNE

AQUITANIANS

Charlemagne imprisoned Hunald II in 769 when the latter led a revolt in an attempt to regain the duchy of Aquitaine, which once belonged to his father.

LOMBARDS

Charlemagne was involved in the conflict between King Desiderius of the Lombards and the pope. In the ensuing war he conquered Lombardy in 772.

ANDALUSIAN MUSLIMS

Desiring to spread Christianity, Charlemagne campaigned against the Muslims in Spain in 777 but was eventually forced to retreat.

AVARS

To secure the frontier of his empire along the Danube River, Charlemagne fought a bloody war against the Avars in 791 and emerged victorious.

© Ed Crooks

778–840 CE

PIETY IS NOT ENOUGH

The difficulty of splitting an empire between ambitious sons

Written by Edoardo Albert

He was not the obvious choice as Archbishop of Reims. Reims was the foremost bishopric in the Frankish empire. Its bishop, having to deal with and live among kings and barons, was expected to come from nobility. But Ebbo, the putative archbishop, was of German peasant stock. Ebbo's mother was recruited as wet nurse for the baby of Hildegard, wife to Emperor Charlemagne himself. Ebbo was already three years old when his mother started feeding the little child that the empress gave birth to. He was a boy, named Louis by his father, and little Louis became fast friends with Ebbo.

At the request of Louis, Charlemagne rendered Ebbo free from his serfdom and paid for his education. That meant, for a boy who was not of noble birth, entry into the Church. Little Ebbo, son of a peasant, became a priest and then librarian to his childhood friend before Louis finally installed him as Archbishop of Reims, an appointment accompanied by barely suppressed astonishment that it should fall to a man of such ignoble birth.

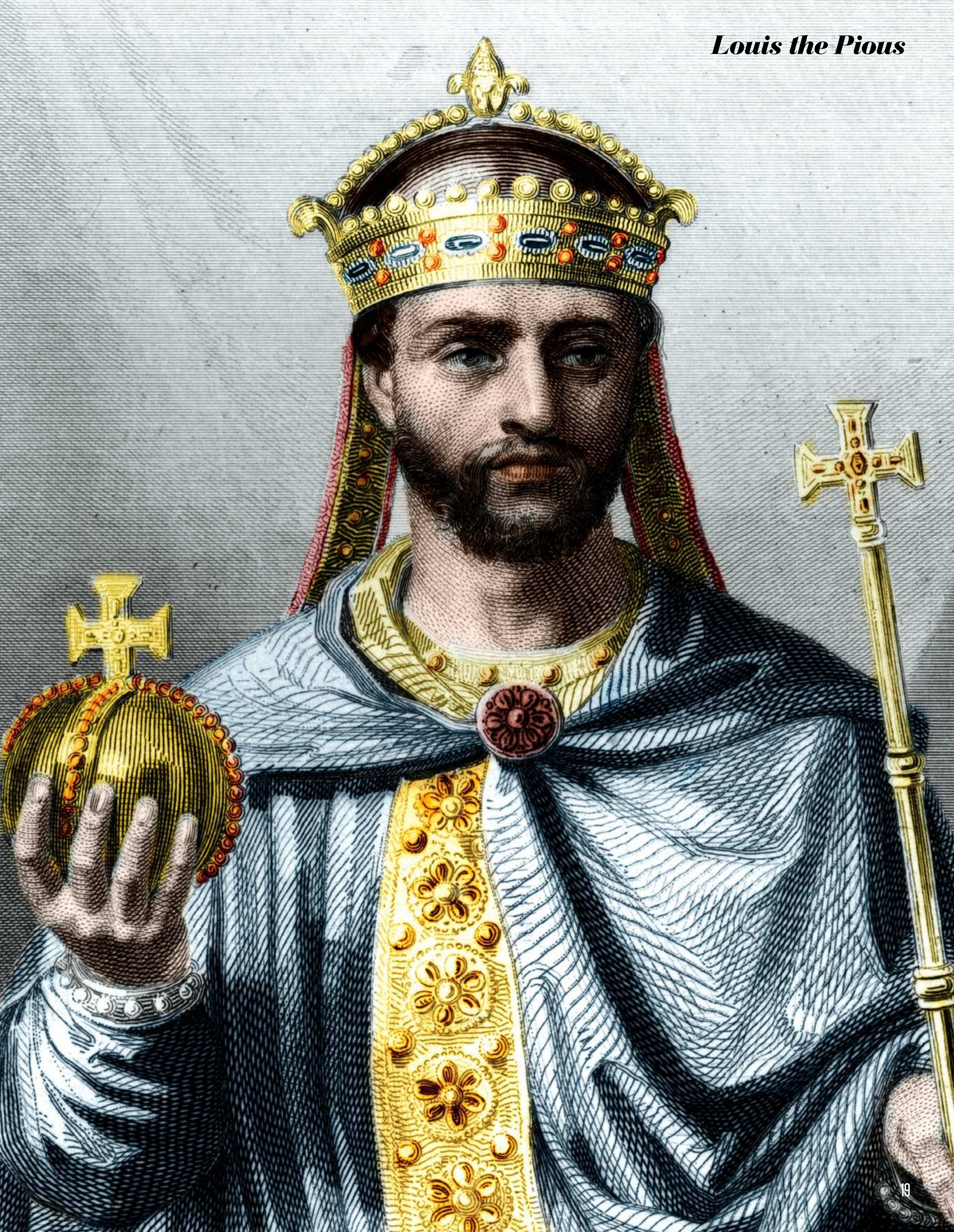
Louis' faithfulness to his childhood friend was typical of the man. Indeed, those clerics whom he had befriended in childhood and youth, when they were themselves young too, were the ones that Louis entrusted with his programme for clerical reform, installing them as archbishops of Orleans, Turin and Lyon. These reforms were Louis' answer to a question that his father had posed to his nobles and heir at the end of his reign, when all its achievements seemed to tremble on the brink. For with his own mortality imminent, Charlemagne, looking towards the prospect of death and judgement, asked, "Are we indeed Christians?"

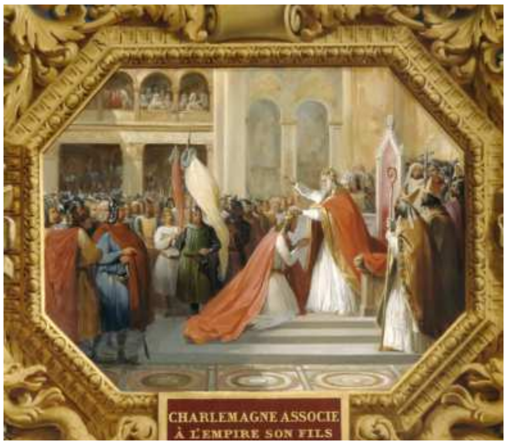
It was an uncomfortable question for his son. Louis had not expected to become the sole ruler of Charlemagne's vast empire. His father, famously fecund, had four wives, as well as numerous concubines. He had produced over 20 children, including two brothers to Louis who were due to share the empire with him: Charles the Younger and Pepin. But both died before their father, leaving Charlemagne contemplating the potential ruin of his life's work. Hence the question.

As a youth Louis had followed his father's example, fathering two children on concubines before he was 16. Charlemagne arranged a marriage for his libidinous son to Ermengarde, the daughter of a Carolingian noble, when he was 16. The marriage caused Louis to reform his conduct: his later children were all the legitimate products of his marriage to Ermengarde and, after her death in 818 CE, to his second wife, Judith of Bavaria.

So when Louis found himself the sole ruler of Charlemagne's vast empire after his father's death in 814 CE, his first step was to try to answer, in the affirmative, the question of whether the Carolingian Empire was Christian. To that end, Louis banished the prostitutes who had previously consorted freely in Aachen, where his father had his palace, and put a stop to the licence that Charlemagne, unwilling to marry them off, had allowed his daughters, dispatching his sisters to convents prepared for them. But there was also the question of what it meant to be a Christian emperor. Louis, unlike his father and grandfather, had no inclination to expand the already vast territory under his control. Rather than conquest, Louis was concerned with consolidation: how to weld together the disparate peoples under his rule.

Louis the Pious





With only one surviving legitimate son, Charlemagne secured Louis' succession by crowning him co-emperor

In a series of laws and councils, Louis sought to define his role and the obligations owed to him by his subject peoples. The vision he outlined was revolutionary: rather than distinct subject peoples comprising various cultural and ethnic groups, Louis put himself forward as the emperor of a single Christian people, a unity that was based theologically on the Pauline notion of the Church as the Body of Christ and practically on the unity of the church that ministered to these people. For while Louis' subjects were in principle Christian, many loyalties were tribal and local. To hold his empire together, Louis needed his subjects to identify with something wider and deeper: Christianity was to be the cultural and religious glue binding it all together.

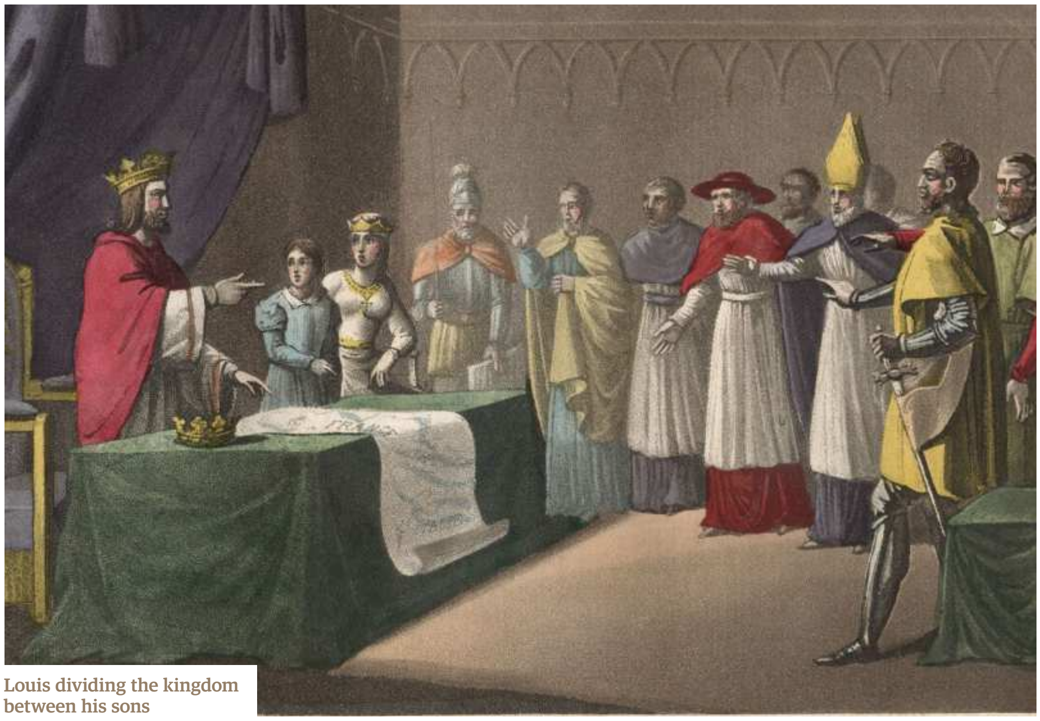
The trigger for these imperial decrees, codified in the Ordinatio imperii, was Louis' brush with death on Maundy Thursday 817 CE. Returning to the palace in Aachen after a service in the cathedral, Louis and his entourage made use of a wooden gallery connecting palace and cathedral, only for the gallery to collapse. Many people in Louis' court were killed. Louis was 39. He had fathered three surviving sons, Lothair, Pepin and Louis with Ermengarde, who were respectively 22, 20 and 11: more than old enough in the case of Lothair and Pepin to help their father in ruling the empire. But with the spectre of death brought forcibly before him, Louis set out his plan to provide for his sons while maintaining unity.

The custom among the Franks heretofore had been for a father's possessions to be divided among his sons, but doing so would clearly lead to the dissolution of what Charlemagne had created and Louis was striving to maintain. So to keep the empire whole, Louis proclaimed his eldest son, Lothair, co-emperor, with the promise of inheriting most of his father's domains, while Pepin was made King of Aquitaine and the young Louis King of Bavaria - which led to him being called Louis the German - although the younger brothers had to recognise Lothair as their overlord.

As a plan it might have worked, but death intervened. On 3 October 818, the reaper scythed through the imperial family, cutting down the empress, Louis' wife of 24 years, Queen Ermengarde. Society abhors an unmarried emperor. Just over a year later, Louis remarried, choosing for his bride Judith of Bavaria, the 22-year-old daughter of a powerful German family. The choice was made easier for Louis because his courtiers arranged a bridal show for him where all the most eligible young women were introduced to their emperor. Contemporary tellings account for Louis' choice because of Judith's beauty and intelligence; modern scholars ascribe it to Louis wanting to secure his eastern frontier. The suggested reasons are not mutually exclusive.

Once married, Judith set about fulfilling the first duty of a new queen: providing Louis with children. A daughter was born first, then on 13 June 823 a son, known to history as Charles the Bald. The imperial couple had no further children, but the birth and survival of Charles, and the determination of Louis and Judith to provide for their son, would cast all the arrangements Louis had made for his kingdom into doubt.

Already by 830, a coalition of Louis' sons by Ermengarde and nobles supplanted by Judith and her family were agitating for an end to the influence of the supposed Jezebel. Joining forces, Lothair, Pepin and Louis the German

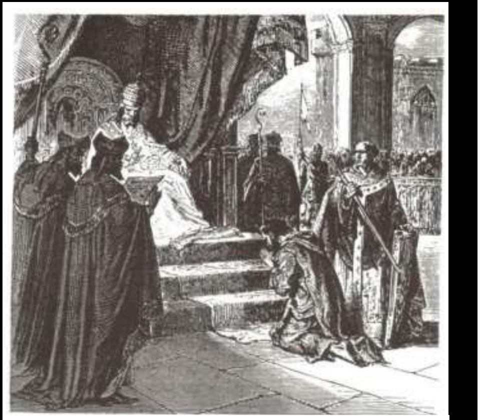


Louis dividing the kingdom between his sons

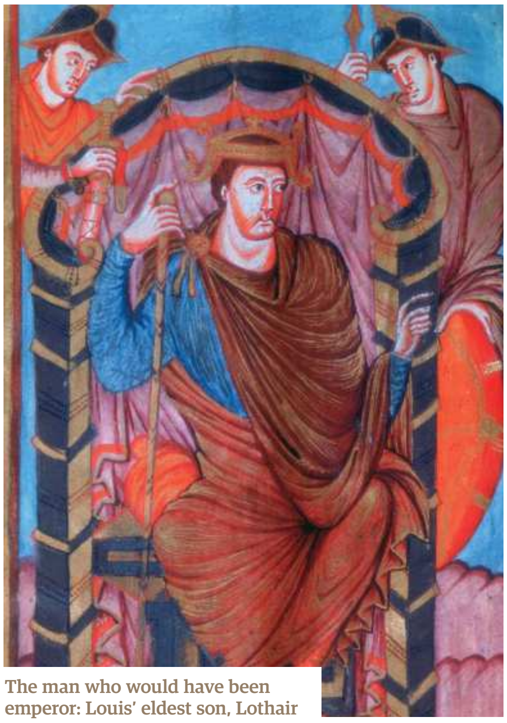
A king on his knees

Louis' part in the death of his nephew called for penitence

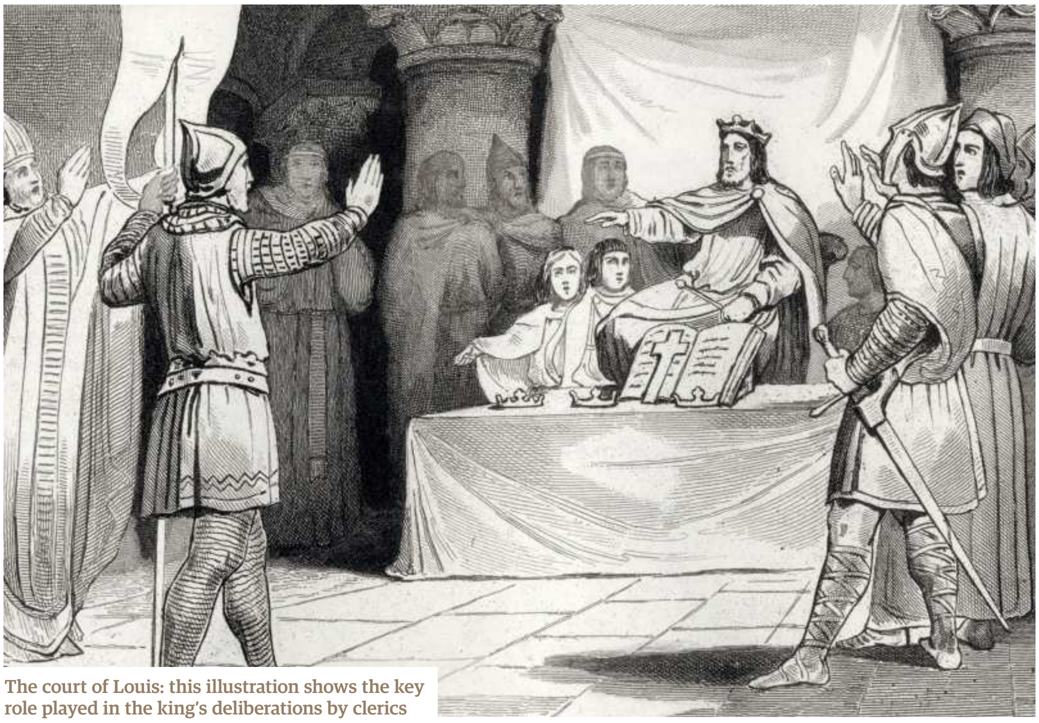
With so much territory to rule, Louis left in place some relations who were not his sons, most notably his nephew, Bernard, King of Italy. But when in 817 CE Louis codified the succession for his empire with the Ordinatio imperii, Bernard realised that he would be subject to Louis' eldest son, Lothair, as overlord. In practice this would have made little difference. Nevertheless, some of his counsellors convinced Bernard, who was only 20, that this was a grave threat to his rule. Bernard made some half-hearted plans to declare his independence, but before he could proceed far with the plans, word reached Louis of this prospective rebellion. Reacting immediately, Louis marched south with his army. Totally outmatched, Bernard tried to negotiate, but Louis seized his nephew and put him on trial. Bernard was found guilty and sentenced to death, but Louis commuted the sentence to blinding. However, Bernard did not long survive his sentence, which was carried out by pushing a heated knife into the eye, and he died two days later in agony. Six months afterwards, Louis' beloved wife, Ermengarde, died. Convicted by his own conscience for what he had done, Louis did public penance for his part in the death of his nephew.



Louis the Pious doing public penance for the death of Bernard



The man who would have been emperor: Louis' eldest son, Lothair



The court of Louis: this illustration shows the key role played in the king's deliberations by clerics

managed to force Louis' abdication and Judith's imprisonment. But Louis won back the support of Pepin and the younger Louis by promising them a greater share in his inheritance.

The revolt three years later proved more serious. Calling their father to meet and arbitrate their claims, the three sons of Ermengarde agreed a meeting with Louis on 30 June 833 at Colmar in Alsace, at a place that came to be called the Field of Lies. When Louis arrived he found his sons ranged against him, supported by the pope and the leading clerics of his own regime. Even his childhood friend Ebbo sided with the three sons of Ermengarde. Faced with such united opposition, Louis was forced to abdicate, giving up his crown, admitting his fault and submitting to lifelong penance for his supposed crimes. The spectacle of his humiliation proved too much: support swung back to the deposed Louis, while the brothers fell to quarrelling and their respective supporters clashed. By 834, Louis was restored as emperor.

Determined to provide for Charles, his son with Judith, Louis installed him as King of Aquitaine when Pepin died in 838, despite Pepin having sons of his own who had prior claim to the throne. For his part Lothair, the eldest, did not rise against his father again, satisfying himself with his territories in Italy. Louis was given the rule of Bavaria. The end result was to split the empire into two halves, eastern and western, territories that would go on to become France and Germany. In the end, the idea of a unified Frankish Empire died with Louis' determination to provide for the son born of his second marriage.

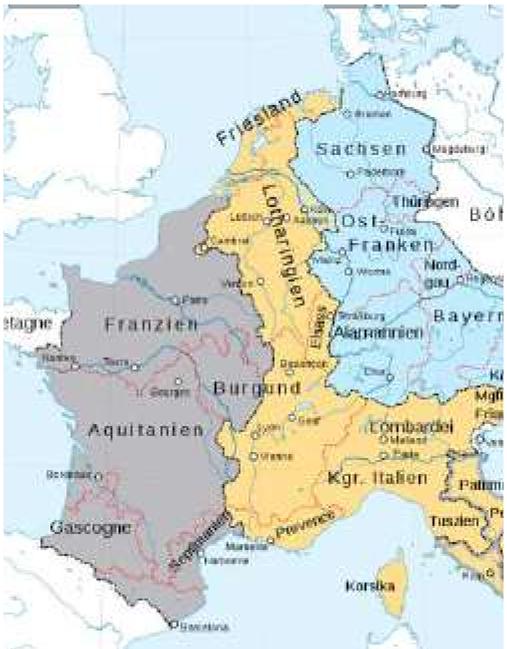
Louis died on 20 June 840. The empire created by his father and grandfather, which he had sought to keep unified during the first half of his reign, would now fall victim to three years of civil war.

> *"Lothair, Pepin and Louis the German managed to force Louis' abdication"*

Brothers in arms

The sons of Louis fought it out for control of the empire

Louis' death in 840 set off another bout of civil strife. Lothair, his eldest son and the man who had once been intended to rule as emperor after Louis' death, declared himself emperor, claiming authority over the lands controlled by his brother, Louis the German, and his half-brother, Charles the Bald. Lothair further stirred the pot by supporting the claim of Pepin II, the son of his deceased brother Pepin, to Aquitaine, which was under the control of Charles the Bald. Unsurprisingly, Lothair's siblings refused to acquiesce. The armies of the contending sons met at the Battle of Fontenoy on 25 June 841. The battle ended with the defeat of Lothair and Pepin II amid great slaughter. Although Lothair attempted to continue the struggle, he had lost too many men. When Louis and Charles cemented their alliance with oaths at Strasbourg on 12 February 842, Lothair realised that he would have to come to terms. The Treaty of Verdun of August 843 set out the division of the empire into three separate realms: Lothair took Middle Francia, which included the Kingdom of Italy, the Low Countries, Provence, Burgundy, Alsace and Lorraine; Louis the German became King of East Francia, the lands east of the Rhine; and Charles took West Francia (roughly modern France). The map of Europe was gradually being drawn.



The division of the Carolingian Empire following the Treaty of Verdun

CRUSADER KINGS

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Uncover how one man expanded his empire despite the efforts of a rapacious pope, treacherous nobles and a 10,000-strong invasion force

30 Frederick I Barbarossa
We trim back the legends and lies to reveal the truth of Red Beards' ruthless quest for domination

36 Frederick II – Hero or villain?
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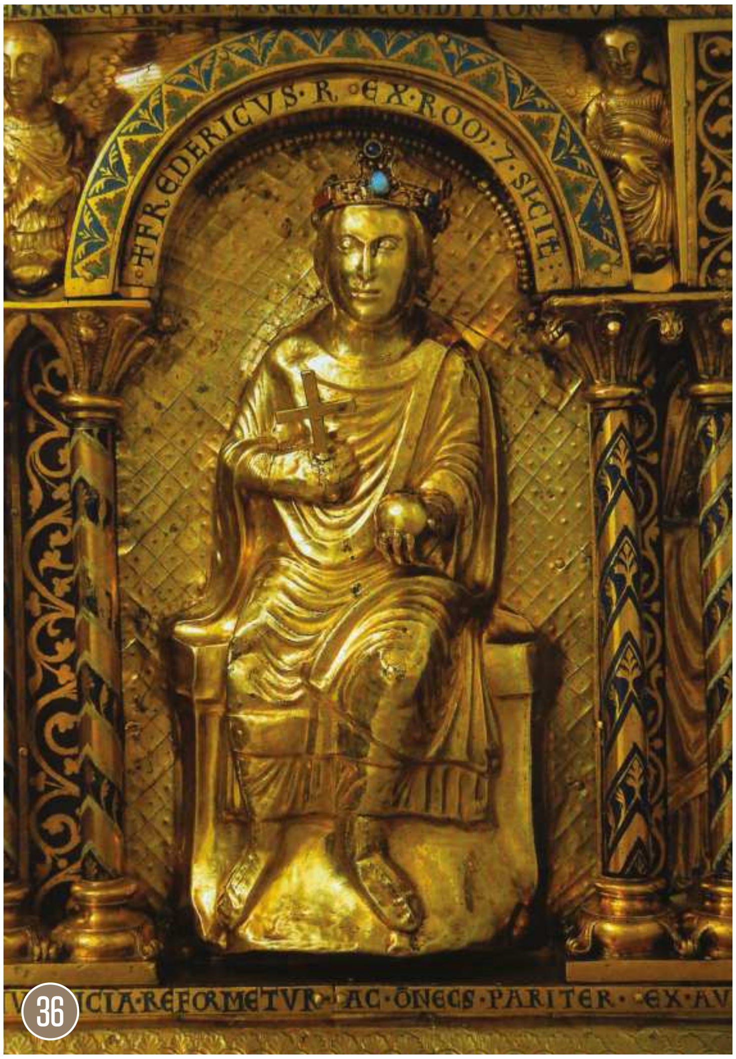

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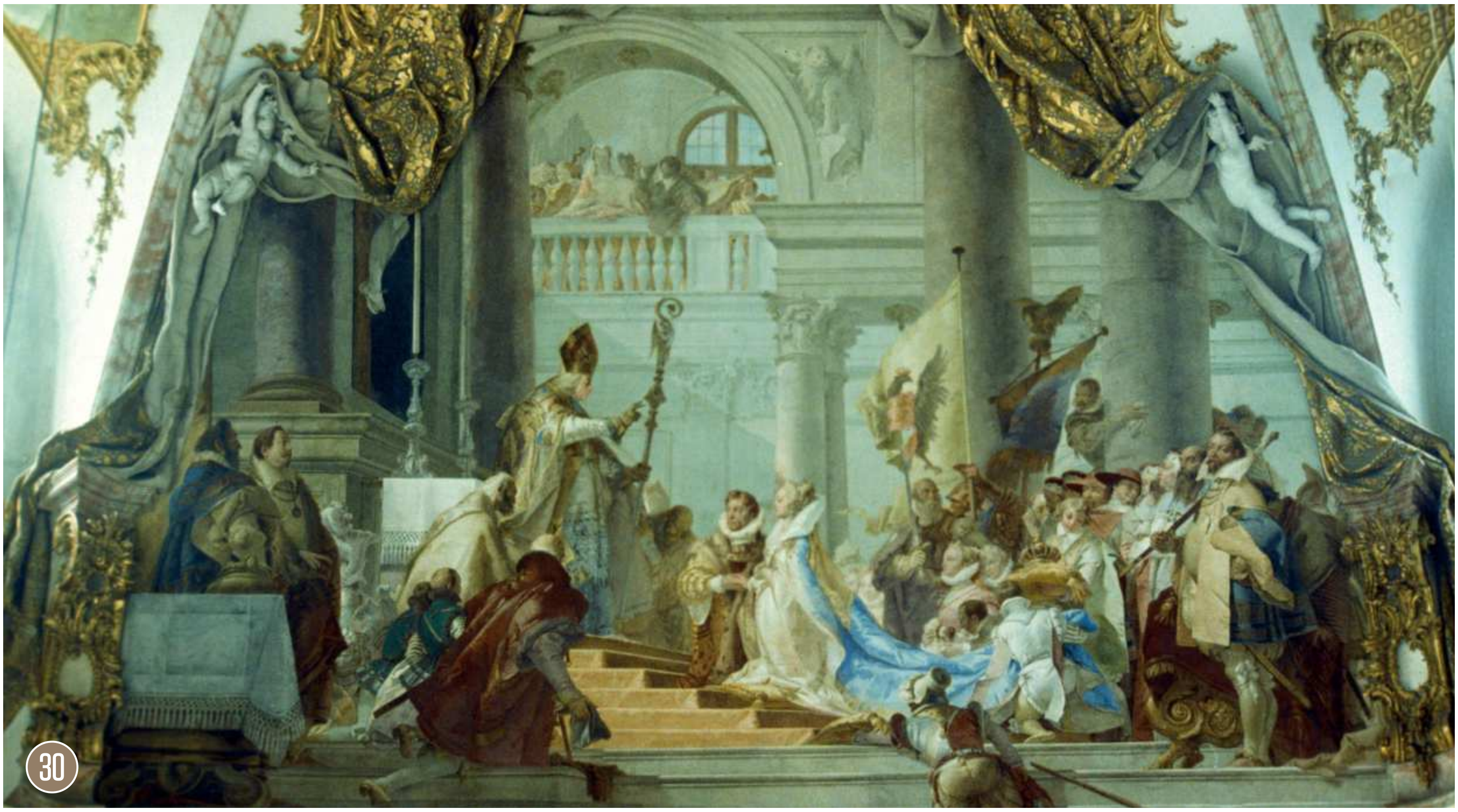

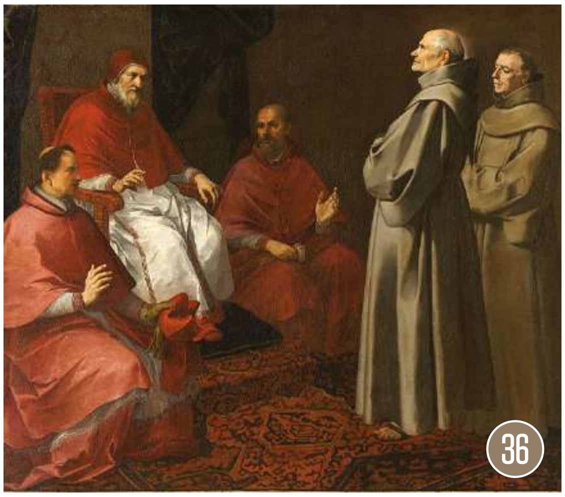
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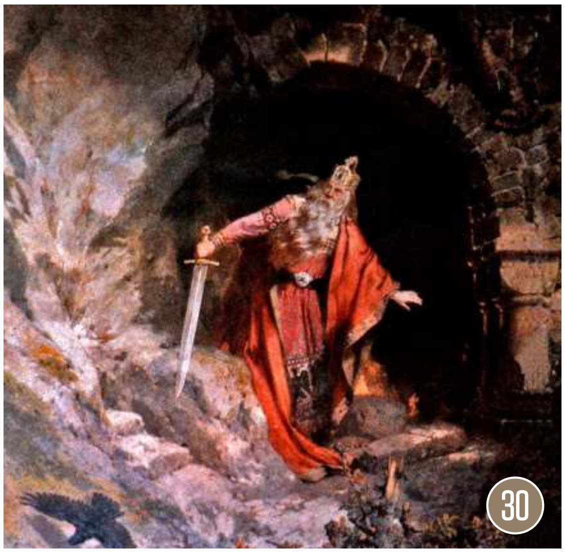
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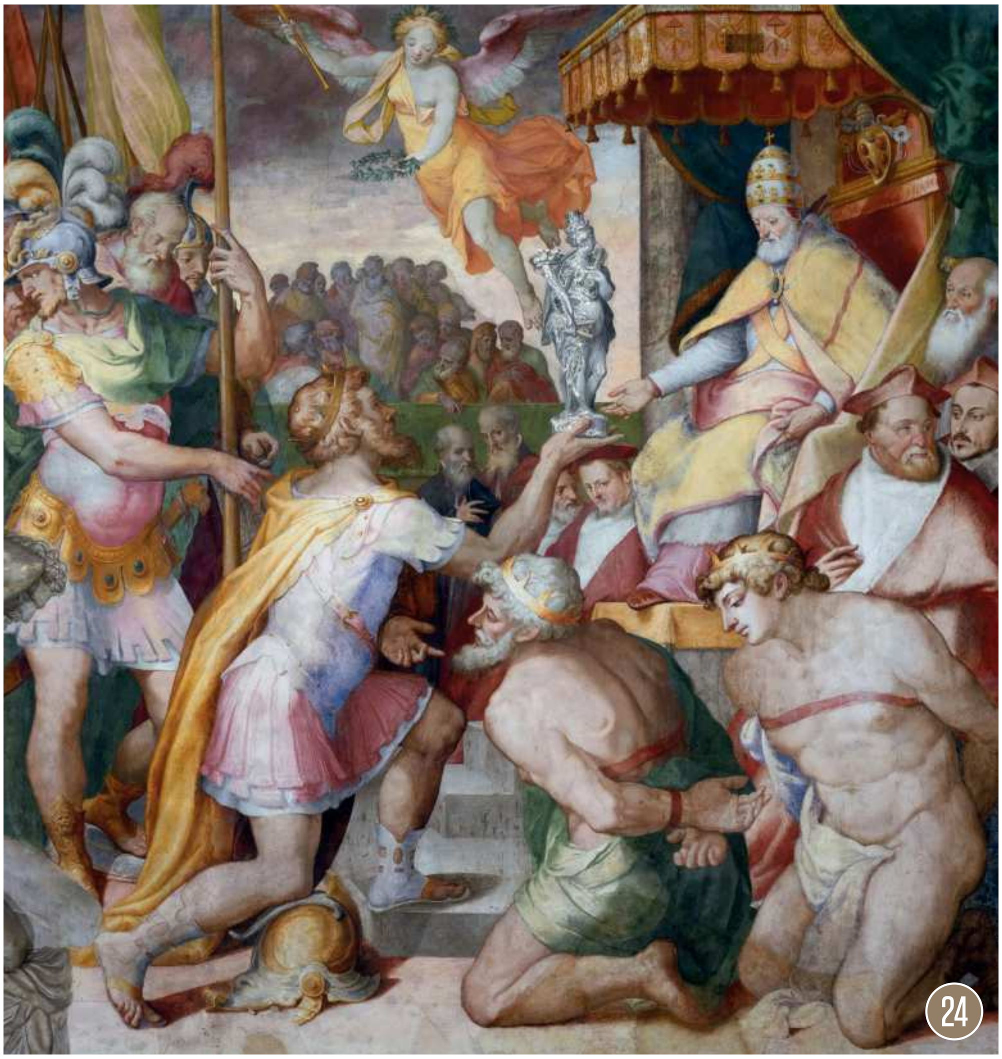
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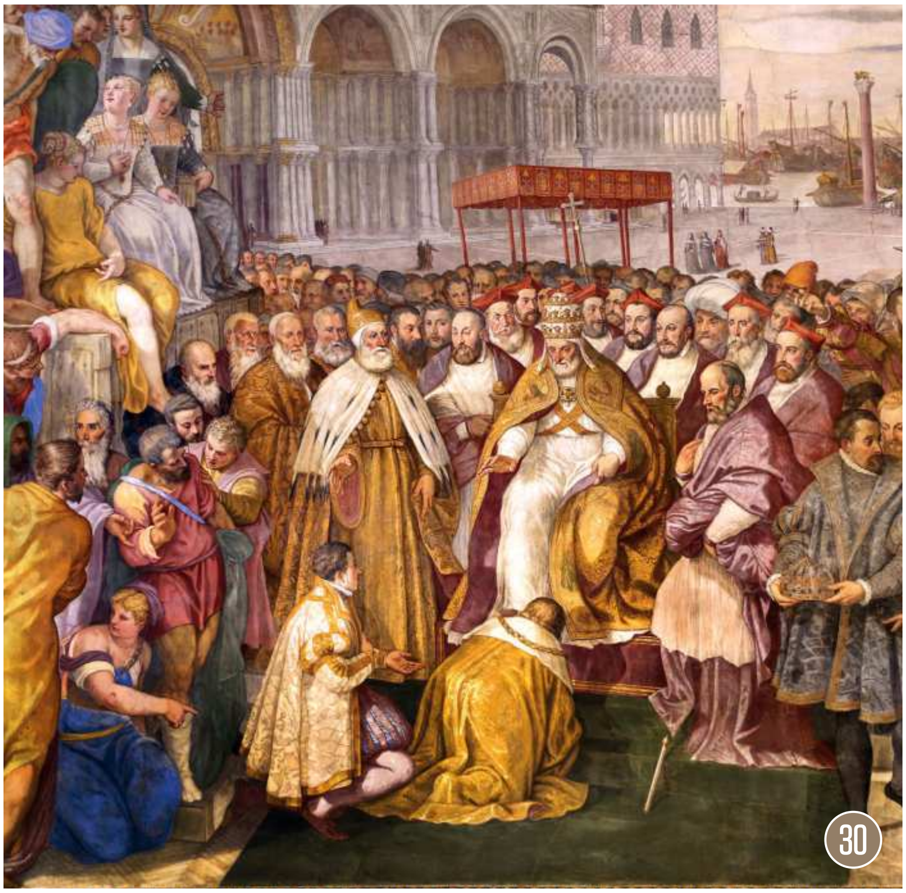
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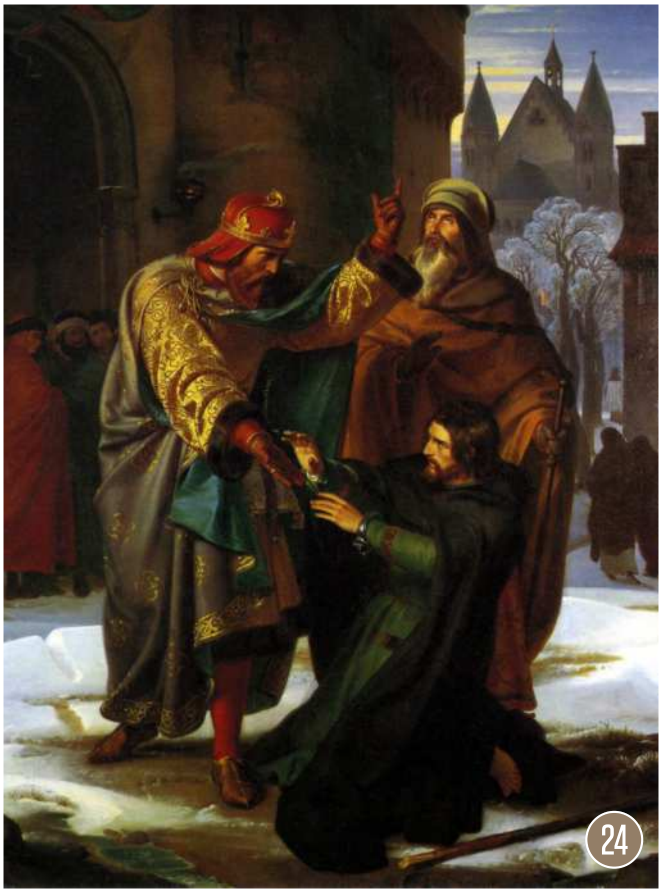
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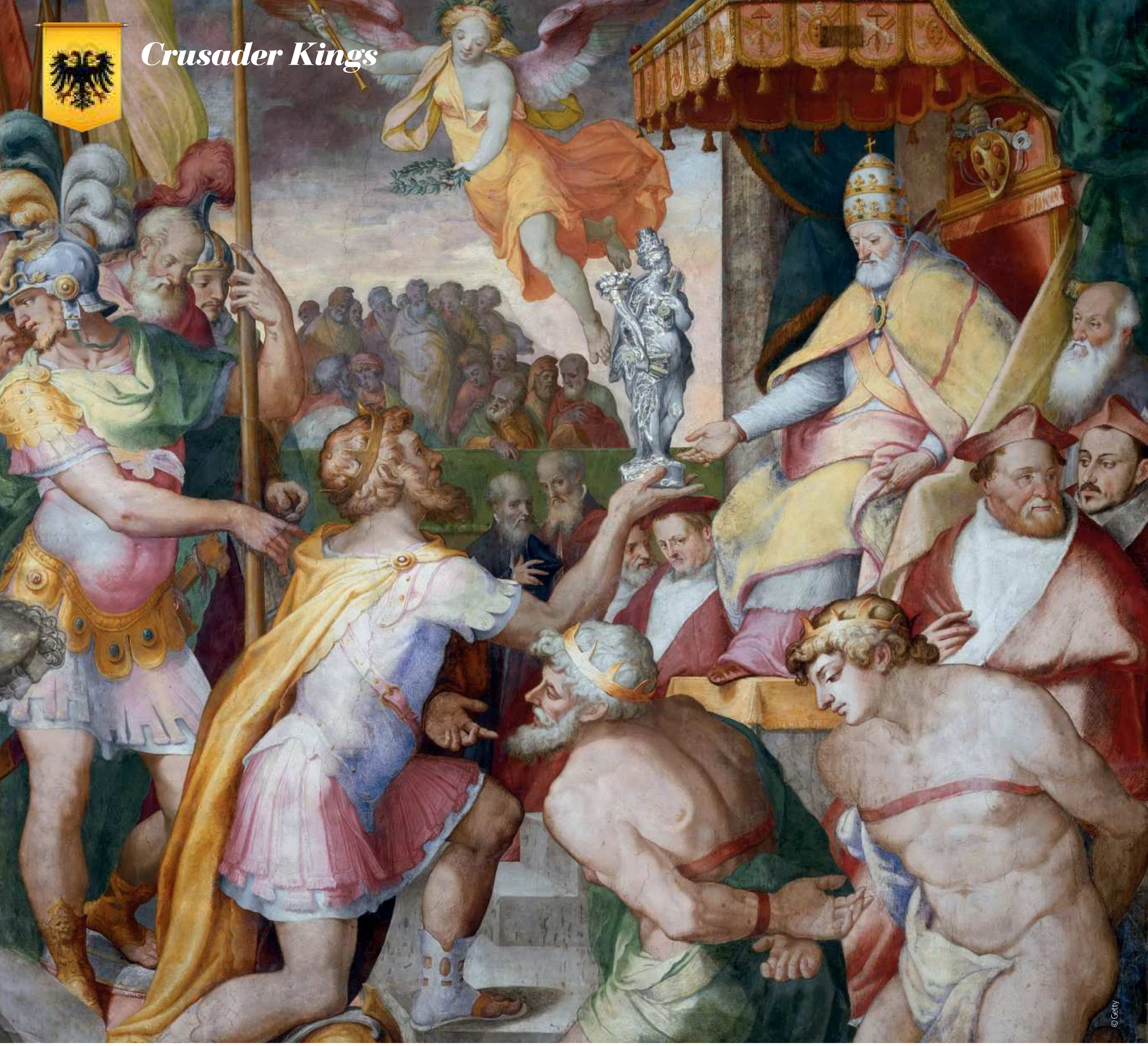

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912–973 CE

OTTO I

How did Otto I join the crown of Germany to the imperial title and set the stage for the Holy Roman Empire?

Written by Ben Gazur

Otto I, known to history as Otto the Great, is traditionally counted as the first Holy Roman Emperor, even though that is a title that was first officially used centuries later. Born as the heir of the Duke of Saxony, Otto first became King of Germany then King of Italy before being crowned by the pope as emperor. His life's work would set the foundations of an institution that would dominate central European politics for hundreds of years.

Otto was born several years before his father Henry the Fowler was elected king by the other German nobles. Little is known about Otto's early years, but he probably received the usual training of a noble in warfare and may have accompanied his father into battle against foes like the Hevelli at Brandenburg.

Otto was destined for an international royal marriage to help establish his father's dynasty. Widukind of Corvey, in his *Deeds of the Saxons*, records how "the king [Henry] gave the daughter of King Edmund, who also was the sister of Athelstan, to his son Otto as a wife". This was Eadgyth of England, and she bore Otto a son named Liudolf who would not always bring joy to his father's life. A complex network of familial relationships between the king, foreign rulers and the governed nobles did not ensure a peaceful realm, however.

Henry the Fowler died in 936 CE. We are told that "when Henry realised that he was now very ill, he summoned the entire people and designated his son Otto as king… He distributed goods and treasures to his other sons. However, he established Otto, who was the eldest and best, as ruler over his brothers and all of the Franks." In fact, Otto was not Henry's oldest son. Thankmar was the eldest, but Henry's marriage to Thankmar's mother had been set aside for religious reasons. At 24 Otto became both Duke of Saxony and King of Germany, or King of East Francia.

At Otto's coronation in the cathedral at Aachen the assembled nobles were called on to pledge their loyalty to Otto (a promise that not all of the nobles chose to keep). Otto presented himself in Frankish rather than his native Saxon dress to further press his claims of continuity deriving from Charlemagne. During the feast following the anointing, dukes served the new king at his table to show their subservience to his power. All seemed calm in Otto's new kingdom.

Unfortunately for Otto, relations between the crown and its subjects were soon strained. The German dukes were often restive. His own father had raised a revolt against the King of Germany while still Duke of Saxony, and Otto's initial attempts to create a stronger monarchy led to open rebellion from the dukes, nobles and even his own family. Not everyone in the royal family was content to see Otto on the throne. In fact, Otto had his younger brother Henry held under the custody of Siegfried, Count of Merseburg, during his coronation to guarantee a peaceful transition. When Siegfried died less than a year later, Thankmar, the son set aside by the late King Henry, wanted to be his heir, but he was disappointed when Otto chose another to take over the land. Enraged at being overlooked once more, when Duke Eberhard of Franconia rose in rebellion, Thankmar allied with him against Otto.

They captured Otto's younger brother, Henry, who also turned against Otto and fought alongside the rebels. Henry, described in chronicles as 'hotheaded', would later also lay claim to the title of king. His claim rested on the fact that he had been 'born to the purple' - born when his father was already king - while Otto was born when their father was a duke.

Church and state

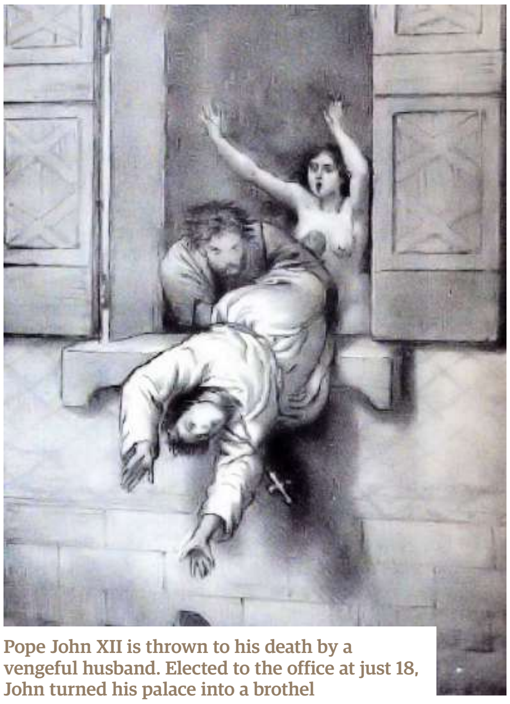
The Catholic Church could be a powerful ally, but Otto had his own reasons for strengthening it

From the moment of his coronation, Otto had chosen to associate himself with divine power. The king wore a crown decorated with 12 stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel alongside images of biblical kings and prophets. Anointed by a bishop in Aachen Cathedral, the new king was sanctified (chosen by God) and so beyond earthly criticism. Beyond merely symbolically allying himself to the Church, Otto sought to use ecclesiastical appointments to strengthen his power.

With a fractious band of dukes proving ever ready to rebel, Otto's policy was to empower bishops. Bishops and archbishops were not hereditary appointments, so each newly appointed spiritual lord was chosen by Otto directly, unlike the nobles. By appointing loyal men he bolstered his position without actively challenging the rights of the dukes. In 951 CE royal abbeys were freed from any obligation except to the king, giving Otto access to power bases across Germany.

While the Church had moral authority, it was also one of the most powerful economic blocs in the state. By controlling the Church, Otto mobilised money and manpower undreamed of by his predecessors. Royal gifts of land into ecclesiastical hands had all the appearance of piety, but ultimately they were bestowed to strengthen Otto's position.

This ivory carving shows Otto I presenting a church to Jesus, though his donations were not entirely altruistic



Pope John XII is thrown to his death by a vengeful husband. Elected to the office at just 18, John turned his palace into a brothel

Otto I gained great personal authority by appointing men loyal to him to bishoprics and abbeys

This rebellion was brought to an end with shows of clemency for most nobles, though Thankmar was killed in church while standing beside an altar for sanctuary. Forgiving rebellious lords while never backing down from a confrontation, would be one of the hallmarks of Otto's domestic policy.

Prowess as a warrior, skill in strategy and the careful application of pardons had solidified Otto's crown in Germany. After dealing with his own brother, various nobles and seeing off a threat from West Francia, Otto was able to rule decisively in a way his father Henry never could. While Henry the Fowler had been first among equals, his rule over powerful dukes was often nominal. Henry had begun the transformation of the kingship Otto wielded when he passed all power to Otto alone. Previously all of a king's sons had been given shares of the land their father ruled. By passing it all to Otto, a unified monarchy had been created, and Otto was not willing to delegate.

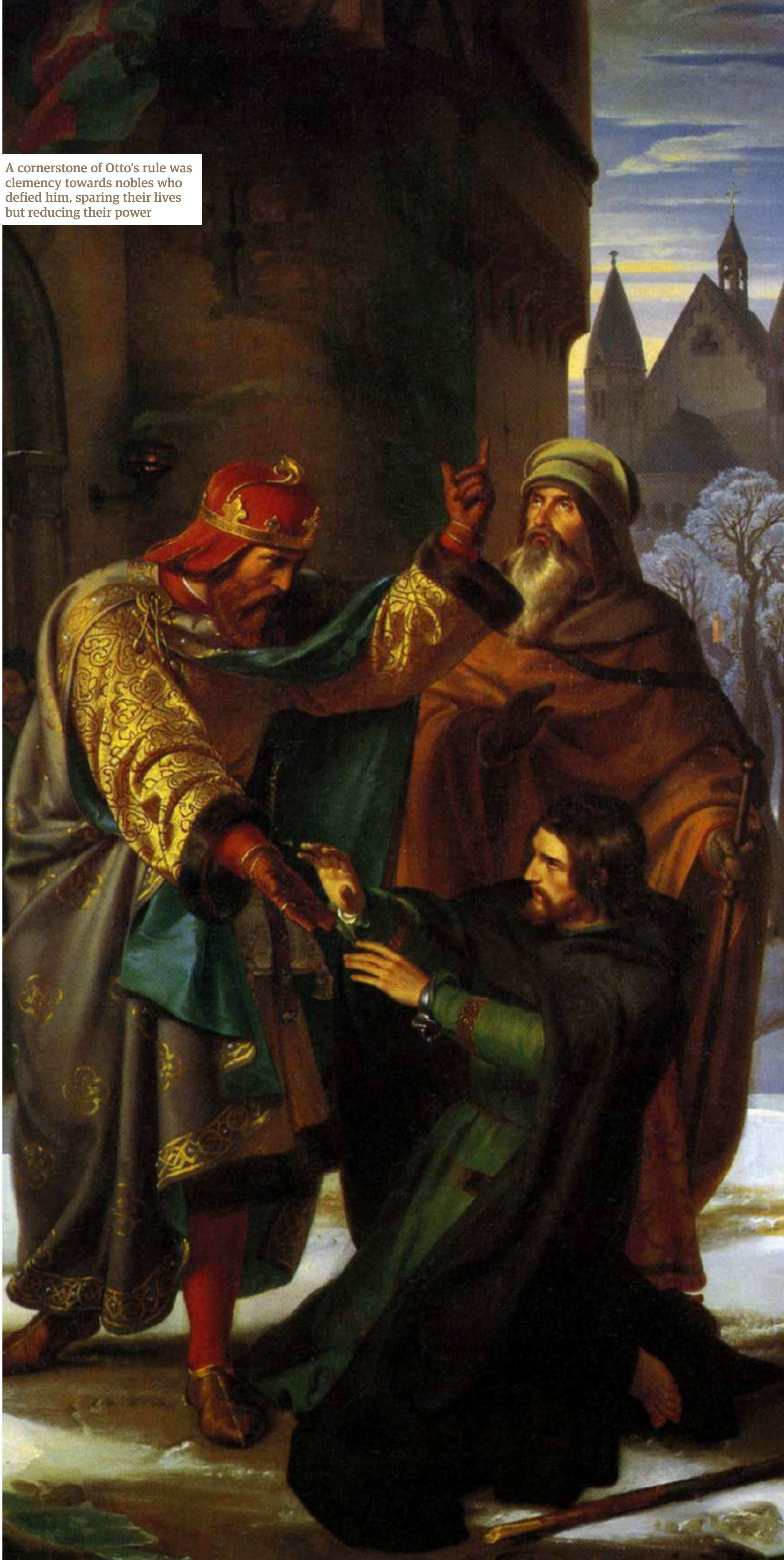
Where previous kings had been content to allow offices and dukedoms to pass through heredity, Otto distributed them to those who served him best. This caused problems at first, but with the crushing of the rebellion in the first years of his rule, nobles saw that the best way to get ahead was through dutiful service to their king.

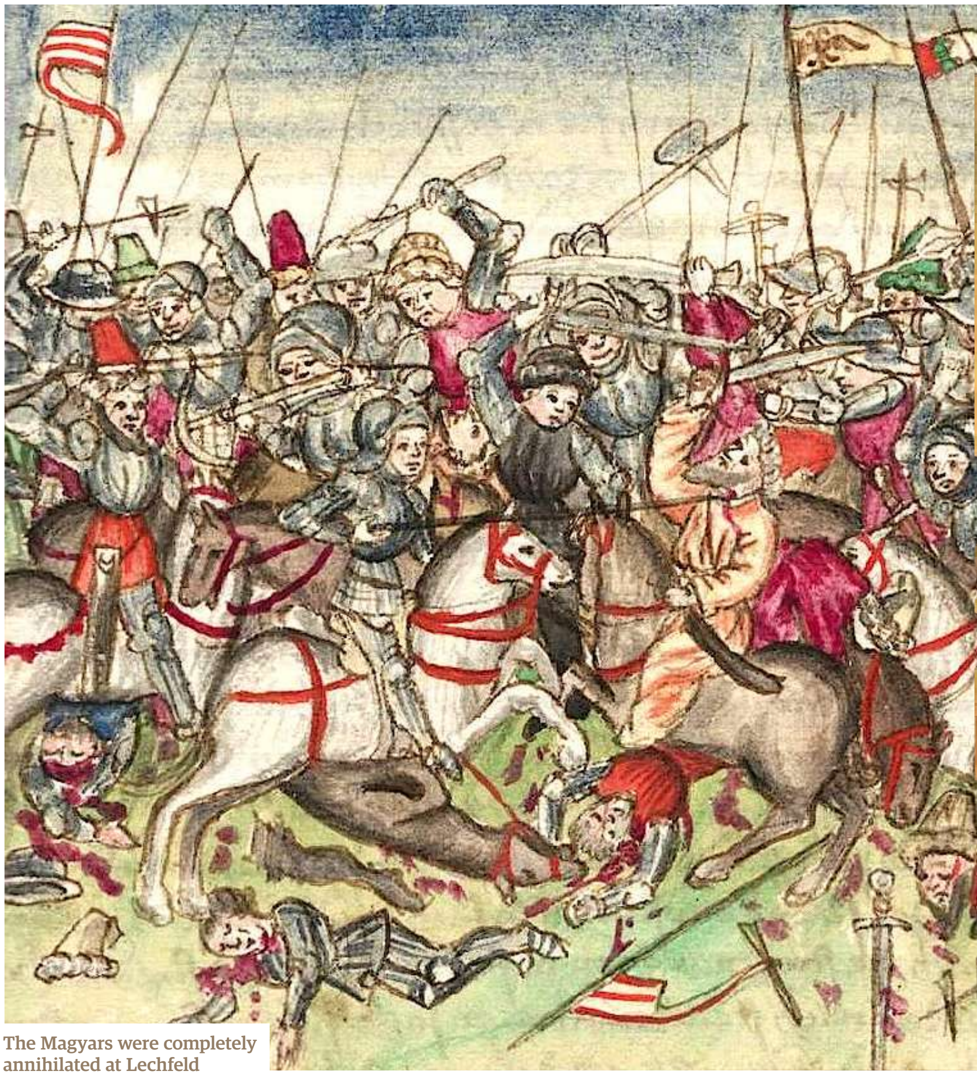
Marriage pacts had always been used to tie states more closely together, but matrimony is rarely enough to end disputes - indeed, some marriages end in nothing but strife. Otto's sister Gerberga became the wife of King Louis IV of France, but it sparked a number of problems for Otto. Louis IV had been involved in the rebellions early in Otto's reign and coveted the Duchy of Lorraine, which had passed from West Francia to East Francia. As Gerberga was the widow of a Duke of Lorraine, Louis claimed the duchy as his own. Otto's military might kept Louis at bay however.

Other foreign powers also tested Otto's rule. The Bohemians had long paid yearly tribute to Otto's father but stopped on Otto's ascension. A state of skirmishing and tit-for-tat raids continued for over a decade between the two states until Otto captured the Duke of Bohemia's son and forced a peace treaty. The two would later join forces against their common enemy - the Magyars.

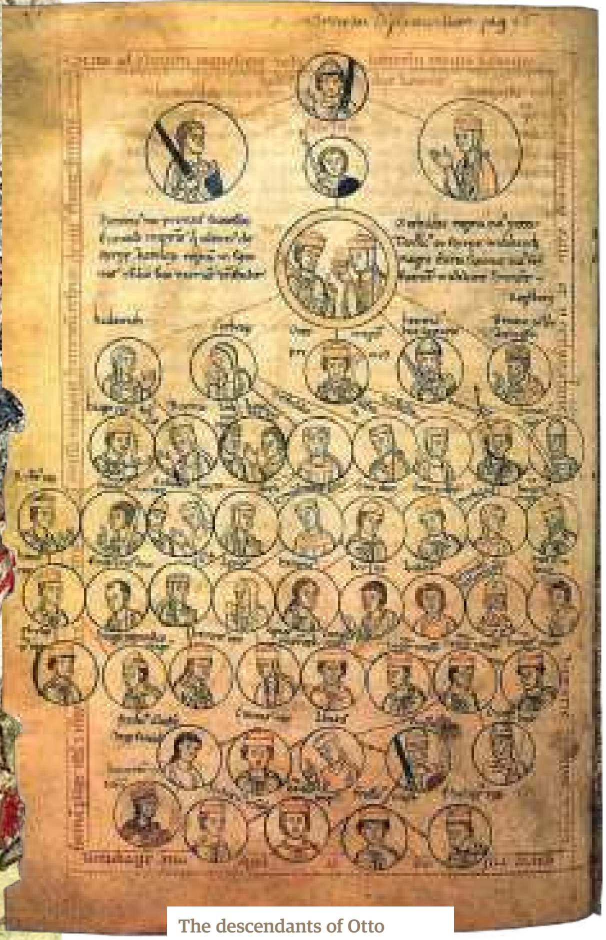
In 952 Otto's son Liudolf revolted against his father. Two years of rebellion came close to driving Otto from his throne. The people were confused in their allegiances. During one siege "everyone remained frozen by hesitation as they feared the lord of the kingdom outside, and his successor who was within the walls". It seemed as if Otto could no longer be king.

The Hungarian Magyars may have rescued Otto from his perilous position. Always threatening the eastern portions of the king's vassal states, they used the chaos of civil war to strike into various duchies. When Liudolf met with the Magyar chiefs and gave them "abundant gifts of gold and silver" it allowed the king to present his son as working with the traditional enemies of the Franks and Saxons. Many nobles now returned to the royal fold. A Diet,


A cornerstone of Otto's rule was clemency towards nobles who defied him, sparing their lives but reducing their power



The Magyars were completely annihilated at Lechfeld



The descendants of Otto formed the Ottonian dynasty that ruled as German kings and emperors until 1024

> *"Otto was the first to turn his horse toward the enemy, fulfilling his duty as the bravest of soldiers"*

a meeting of the lords of Germany, ratified a peace between father and son as well as dealing with other matters. Lands, duchies and bishoprics were reassigned to such men as the king could trust. The final settlement left the king with greater personal authority than ever before. The Magyars, however, were not content.

The Hungarian tribes had taken full advantage of the havoc of the civil war to raid German lands. Emboldened by their successes, a large invasion force gathered. The king raised an army of around 8,000 men and cavalry to confront 8,000 to 10,000 Hungarians. The two sides met at the Battle of Lechfeld on 10 August 955. Otto himself led the strongest of the German divisions, but victory seemed in some doubt when the Hungarians scattered several legions, and it looked as if the German force would be outflanked. Thankfully for Otto, the Hungarians couldn't resist the temptation to raid the German baggage train when they came across it, enabling their enemy to counter-attack.

The chroniclers have King Otto delivering a resounding oration to his faltering troops: "I know that we are over-matched in numbers, but not in strength and not in our arms. We know that most of them are completely lacking in armour. What is of even greater consolation to us, they lack the aid of God."

Whether by God's design or the king's, the Hungarians were turned back. "[Otto] was the first to turn his horse toward the enemy, fulfilling his duty as the bravest of soldiers and the best of emperors." For almost a century after the Battle of Lechfeld the Hungarians ceased to be a threat to German lands, and for the first time Otto was hailed by his forces as imperator – emperor. "The king, made glorious by this celebrated triumph, was named father of the fatherland and emperor by his army."

The popes had long gifted the title of imperator to useful kings. Even though they had no power over the realms once been ruled by Charlemagne, a succession of Italian kings were given nominal title to those lands and named emperor.

In 951 Otto had led a force into Italy to rescue and marry Adelaide, daughter and widow of kings of Italy, and to drive the current king, Berengar II, from his throne. Otto was crowned King of Italy with the Iron Crown of Lombardy. Following his

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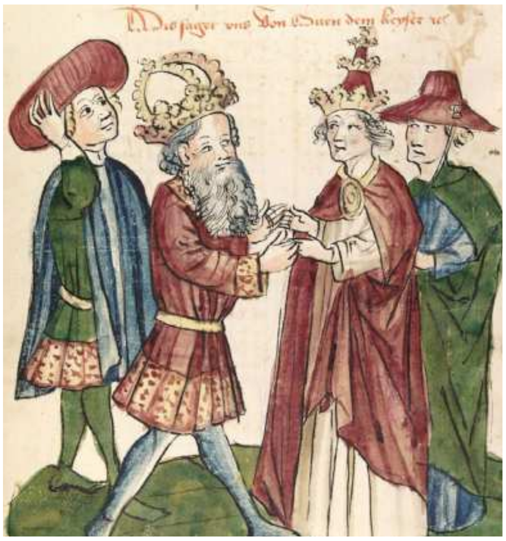
Popes and politics

Crowning an emperor was one thing, but working with him was quite another

John XII was the pope who crowned Otto as emperor in 962 CE, and together they produced the Diploma Ottonianum, which set out what the relationship was to be between popes and emperors, as well as agreeing to which lands were under papal control. Yet within a year John XII was scheming with Magyars and the Byzantine Empire to fight against Otto, even as the emperor was clearing Italy of the enemies of the pope.

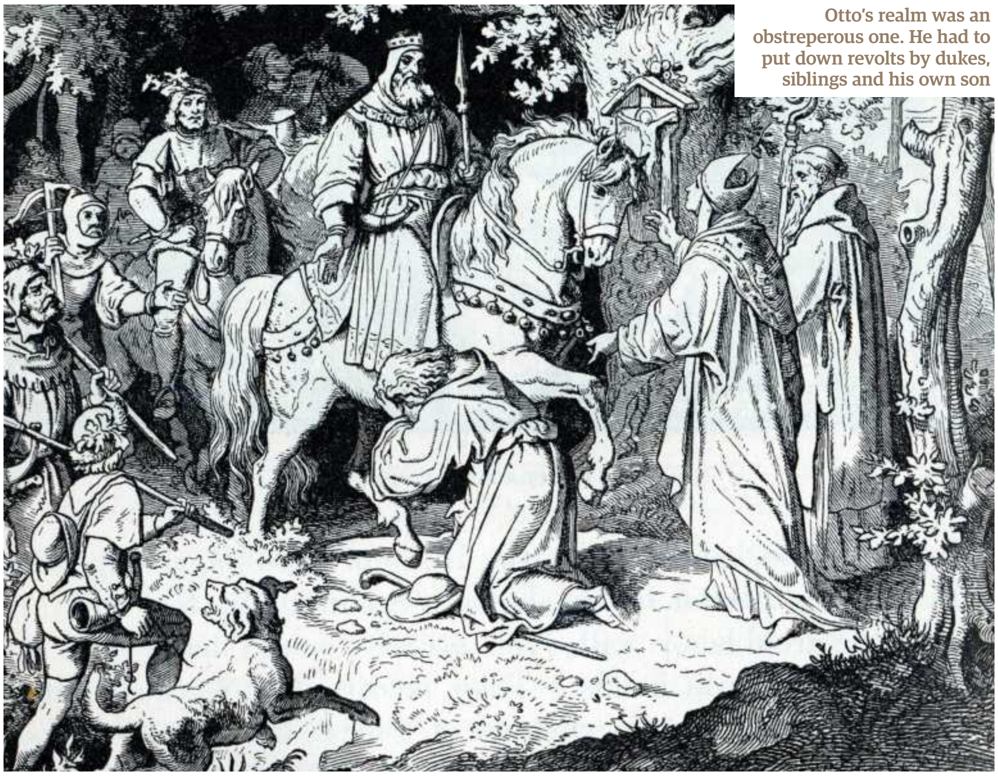
Otto returned to Rome, drove out John XII and called a council to elect a new, hopefully more pliable, pontiff. When they elected Leo VIII in his stead Otto considered the matter settled. The Roman populace did not, however, and Leo was forced to flee the city, allowing John to return to St Peter's. When John XII died the Romans elected Benedict V in his place. Otto, incensed at the treatment of his choice of pope and facing a rebellion there, returned to Italy from Germany.

His armies soon restored peace, and Benedict was deposed peacefully, allowing Leo VIII to return to the Vatican. John XIII was elected with the emperor's approval but was disliked by the Roman crowd, who imprisoned him. Otto was therefore forced once more to use force against Rome. For securing his position, John XIII declared Otto the "liberator and restorer of the Church".



Pope John XII made Otto an emperor but soon turned against the monarch he had created

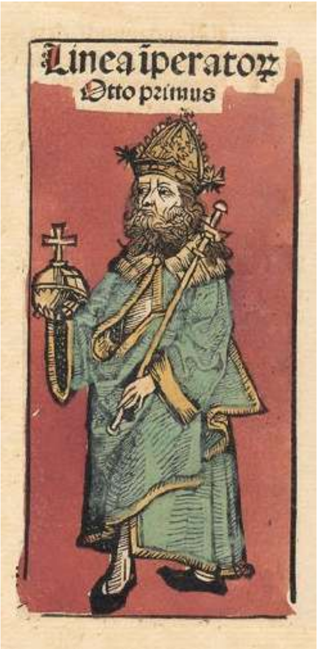
> "He had governed his subjects with paternal mercy"

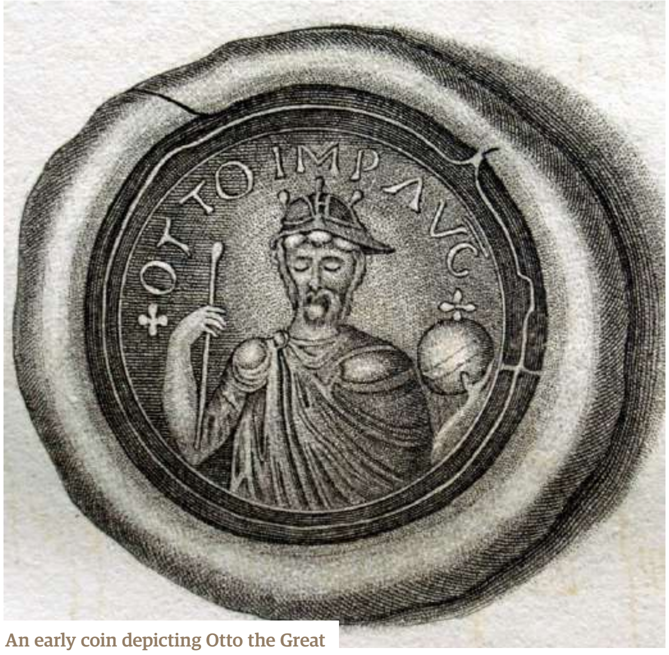


Otto's realm was an obstreperous one. He had to put down revolts by dukes, siblings and his own son defeat of the pagan Magyars, the king chose to pursue an imperial crown.

Otto had restored Berengar to his throne, but in 957 he sent his son Liudolf to lead an army into Italy to again subdue Berengar, who had proven a disobedient bannerman. Liudolf died before he could achieve his aims, robbing Otto of his heir. In his place a two-year-old son by Adelaide, also called Otto, a descendent of both Germany and Italy, became the presumptive heir. With Liudolf dead, Berengar II struck out at Otto's lands near Verona and the Papal States. The pope appealed directly to the German king for aid. With the promise of crowning Otto as emperor, the pope drew Otto once more into Italy.

Quickly driving Berengar II from his captured lands and off his throne, Otto was pronounced emperor in a coronation at Rome, with the pope anointing Otto and Adelaide himself. In one moment the lands of Germany and Italy were united under one man, and he was given the title of emperor. The Holy Roman Empire had begun - though Europe had not quite realised it yet.





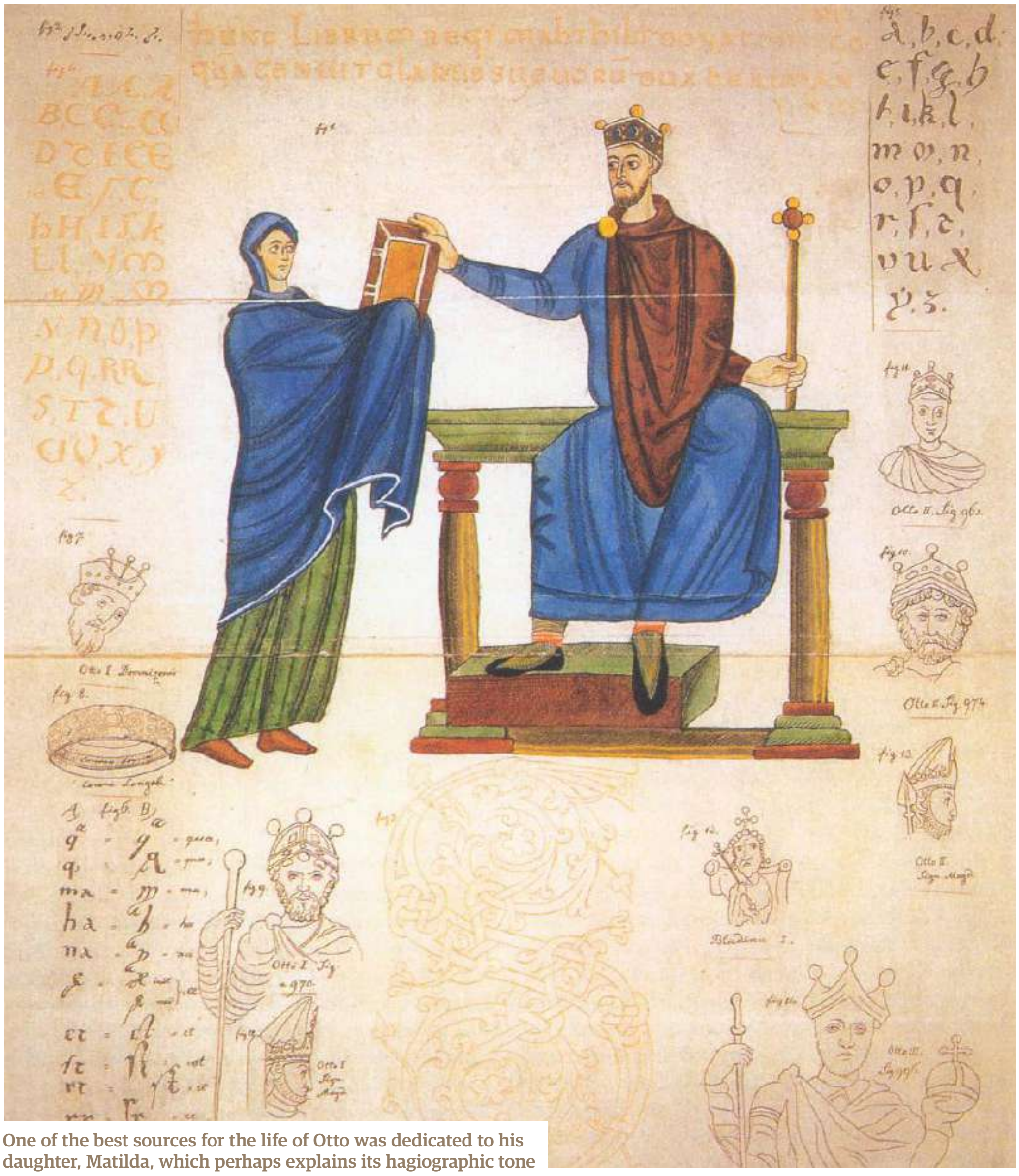
An early coin depicting Otto the Great

Otto can be viewed as the first true Holy Roman Emperor - certainly he held his power more personally than other rulers before him. From Otto flowed all patronage and lands. He was also unsatisfied with merely being an indirect ruler. In the aftermath of the Battle of Lechfeld, rebellious Slavs had offered him peace on the basis of them remaining self-governing under his overlordship rather than being under Otto's direct control. Otto refused and reduced their lands to territories under his own loyal followers. The creation of buffer zones, called marches, along his borders allowed German power to extend ever eastward without creating duchies that might oppose the throne.

It was following the king's victories against the Hungarians and Slavs that we are told other nations began to treat Otto with respect and a measure of deference. "As a consequence, he received many emissaries from the Romans, Greeks, and Saracens… The hope of all Christians everywhere rested in him."

Otto died in 973 CE. The final years of his reign had involved him heavily in Italian and papal politics, with several rebellions drawing him south. His son, Otto, was crowned as co-emperor and married to a Byzantine princess, so when death took Otto I, power flowed smoothly to the next generation. Otto's empire was built to last.

Otto I was fondly remembered by his subjects. "The people said a great deal in praise of him and remembered that he had governed his subjects with paternal mercy, and had freed them from their enemies. He had conquered with arms his arrogant enemies, namely the Avars, Saracens and Danes. He had subjugated Italy. He had destroyed the shrines to the gods among the neighbouring peoples. He established churches and orders of priests." Truly, he was Otto the Great.



One of the best sources for the life of Otto was dedicated to his daughter, Matilda, which perhaps explains its hagiographic tone

© Wiki

1122–1190

FREDERICK I BARBAROSSA

The ambitious emperor who took on the world - and usually won

Written by Scott Reeves

As far as family trees go, the one that baby Frederick of Swabia was born into was impressive. The future Frederick I Barbarossa was the descendent of two of Germany's most powerful families: the Hohenstaufens on his father's side, and the Welfs on his mother's. His father, also called Frederick, was Duke of Swabia, while his mother Judith was a daughter of the Duke of Bavaria. Moreover, the young Frederick was a grand-nephew of Henry V, the Holy Roman Emperor.

Frederick's illustrious lineage was a curse as well as a blessing. The Hohenstaufens and the Welfs were rivals who vied for power in Germany, and conflict between them broke out in 1125, when Frederick was still a toddler. When Henry V died without a legitimate son, Frederick's father desired the throne as his closest heir but was defeated in the election that decided the destination of the crown. The new King of Germany - officially titled King of the Romans - was Lothair III, formerly the Duke of Saxony. Duke Frederick did not take the result well and ended up clashing with the new king, whose brother-in-law, the new Duke of Bavaria, attacked Swabia on behalf of Lothair.

After ten years of fighting left him on the back foot, Duke Frederick submitted to King Lothair and was pardoned. Two years after the reconciliation Lothair died, and the subsequent election chose as his successor Conrad, Duke Frederick's younger brother, although the new King of the Romans faced his own rebellions from Lothair's son-in-law and grandson.

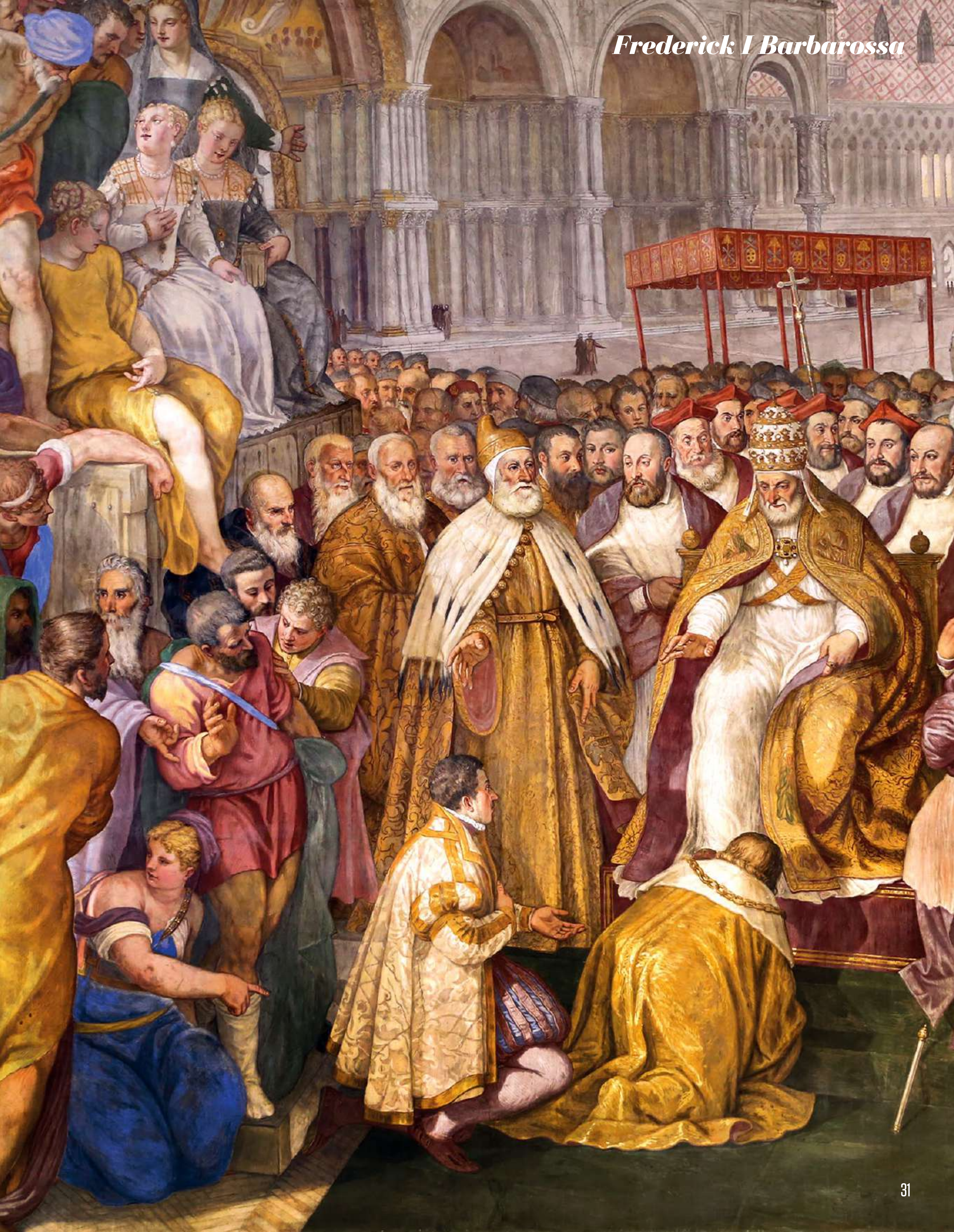
Since the future Barbarossa's childhood was surrounded by almost constant conflict, it's hardly surprising that he grew up with an interest in warfare and was keen to take the crusader vow alongside his uncle Conrad in December 1146 after hearing Bernard of Clairvaux preaching.

Despite the misgivings of his father, Frederick set his affairs in order, marrying Adelaide of Vohburg in early 1147, a dynastic match that Conrad arranged to appease a potentially rebellious noble family. In April that year, Frederick inherited his father's title when the elder Frederick died, but that did not stop the new Duke of Swabia from departing Regensburg with his uncle's 20,000-strong crusader army just seven weeks later.

The young duke was quick to stamp his authority. When an ailing crusader was robbed and killed at a Byzantine monastery where he had been sent to recuperate, Frederick was sent to apprehend those responsible. His no-nonsense approach saw the monastery razed to the ground. Frederick had signalled that he was not a man to be messed with.

Whereas the French crusader army under King Louis VII decided on a longer but safer route to the Holy Land around the coast of Anatolia, Conrad marched straight across enemy territory and was caught off-guard and crushed by the Seljuk Turks at the Battle of Dorylaeum. Frederick was entrusted with getting a message to Louis VII as the rearguard was annihilated by constant attacks during its retreat to Nicaea. Just 2,000 men - barely a tenth of the original force - made it to safety.

The rump of Conrad's army finally made it to their destination after linking up with the



French. Having made a last-minute decision to switch the focus of their attack from Edessa to the most powerful Muslim city-state, Damascus, the crusader armies were forced to cut off the siege after only five days when Muslim reinforcements arrived and the defenders showed they were able to harass the besiegers.

Defeat followed defeat, and the crusader armies limped home. The Second Crusade was a humiliating setback for the Europeans, but Frederick was one of the few leaders who returned with his reputation largely intact, perhaps the result of his youth and flashes of brilliance shown on the battlefield. As a result, Conrad III handed the royal insignia to his nephew from his deathbed a few years later and announced his wish that Frederick, rather than his own six-year-old son, succeed him. At least, that was the account given by the only two witnesses, one of whom was Frederick himself.

Frederick eagerly pressed his claim and was duly elected the next King of the Romans; Conrad's young son was given the Dukedom of Swabia that Frederick had just vacated. Within days Frederick was in Aachen to receive the crown in a coronation ceremony. The kingdom that he now ruled was a fractious and squabbling patchwork of 1,600 city-states and dukedoms ruled by princes, dukes and other nobility. Some were powerful entities in their own right, like Swabia, Saxony and Bavaria. Others were so inconsequential that they could barely be found on a map.

Quarrels between the city-states had plagued Germany for decades, but Frederick sought to unite them in a common cause: re-establishing the German influence in Italy that had been lacking since the glory years of Charlemagne and Otto the Great. Diplomatic overtures to Pope Eugene III concluded in the Treaty of Constance, in which Frederick pledged to defend the papacy from her enemies, particularly the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, and restore the pope to the city of Rome.

Now with the blessings of the Holy Father and an excuse to march south, Frederick and his army departed in October 1154. First he received the submission of Milan, then he besieged Tortona for two months; the stubborn city's fate was to be utterly demolished. At Pavia he claimed the Iron Crown of Lombardy and was crowned King of Italy, a title traditionally claimed by the Kings of the Romans. Yet that was not enough. Pushing further south, Bologna and Tuscany fell before Frederick set his sights on Rome. Papal forces had been ejected from the ancient city by a republican revolt that established the Commune of Rome under the leadership of Arnold of Brescia. A number of popes had struggled to regain control for ten years until

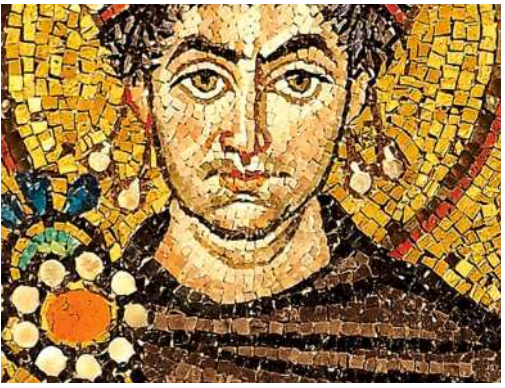
The Justinian Code

Frederick embraced an old Roman text to combat the power of the papacy

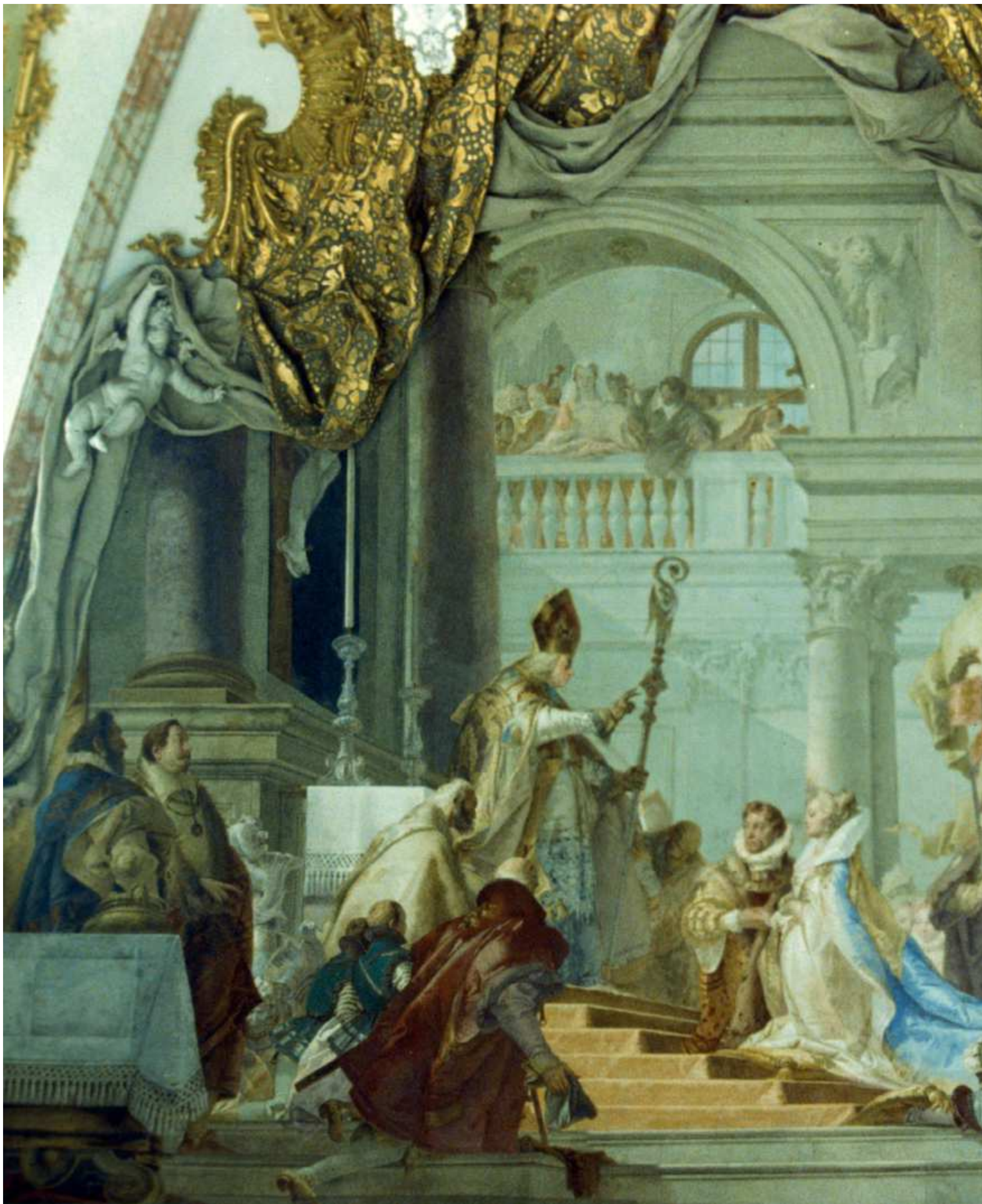
Frederick was more than just a great commander – he was also a canny political operator. Aware that the relationship between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy had been distorted since the Investiture Controversy, when the right of the emperor to appoint bishops and popes had been curtailed, Frederick sought to counterbalance papal power by embracing a 600-year-old legal system.

The Justinian Code had been created on the orders of Justinian I, Emperor in the East, but it had become extinct after the Great Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. However, the code was rediscovered by scholars in the second half of the 11th century, and Frederick embraced it as a moral, non-religious framework for administering his kingdom on both sides of the Alps.

Frederick was also aware that by adopting the old Roman code of law he was consciously linking his rule to that of the ancient emperors of Rome. It was a deliberate attempt to boost the legitimacy of his right to rule and to diminish the role of the pope. In Frederick's mind his Holy Roman Empire was a direct descendent of the old Roman Empire, not a fief of the papacy. Not even the heir to St Peter could limit his ambition.


© Wiki; Petar Milosevic

To counterbalance the papacy, Frederick invoked a saint of the Orthodox Church who ruled from Constantinople

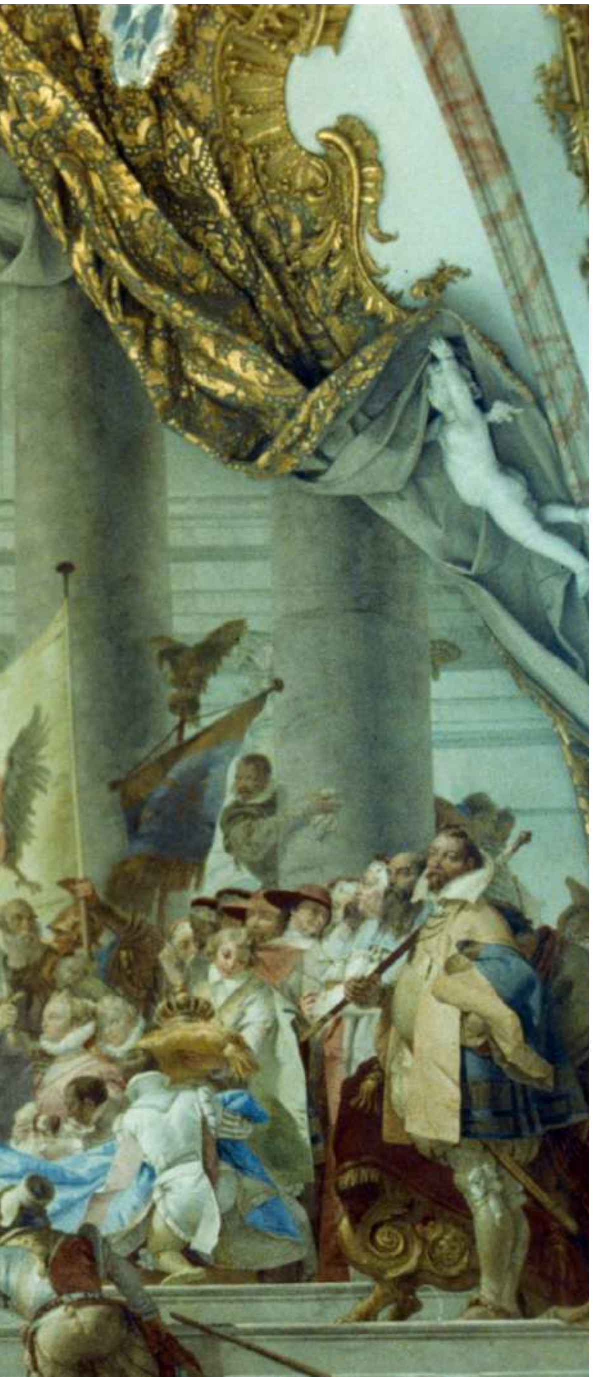


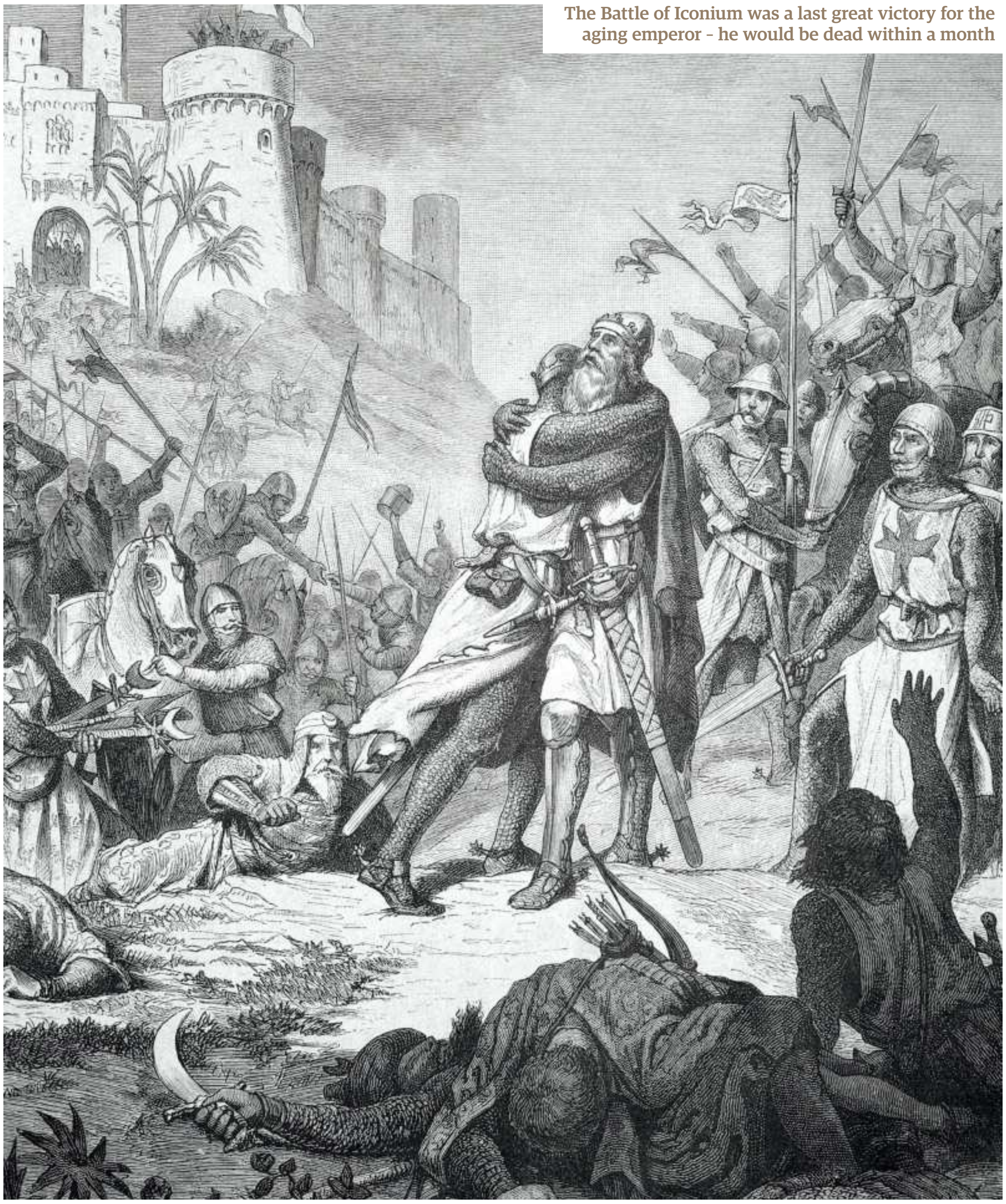
Frederick's army arrived and took the city by force before hanging Arnold as a traitor. Eugene III had died before the city was retaken, so it fell to the new pope, Adrian IV, to crown Frederick as Holy Roman Emperor in St Peter's Basilica.

"A number of popes had struggled to regain control for ten years until Frederick's army arrived"

Frederick had amassed an impressive number of titles in the years since he had been named Duke of Swabia, but he had also collected a few enemies. The conquered Italians called him Barbarossa ('red beard') and resented control from the north, seeking every opportunity to wriggle out of paying their dues. Frederick's imperial coronation took place before an unhappy Roman populace who had grown used to a degree of freedom under the republicans, and riots soon broke out, only to be only put down by Frederick's army with 1,000 locals left dead. Even the pope, who had just crowned Frederick, viewed him with suspicion. A minor diplomatic spat delayed the coronation for a day after Frederick refused to hold the pope's stirrup and the pontiff refused to give Frederick the kiss of peace - rituals that, though seemingly insignificant, were a sign of the tension between pope and emperor that would reignite in the future.

Moreover, the German nobles had taken advantage of Frederick's absence to rear their heads. Frederick postponed his planned offensive against the Kingdom of Sicily and returned north to deal with the jostling dukes. He united Bavaria and Saxony under his younger cousin Henry the Lion, ensuring that the two powerful dukedoms were placed under the control of his family, but he compensated the previous Duke of Bavaria by making him the first Duke of Austria. Frederick also married 12-year-old Beatrice, Countess of Burgundy, thus adding another title to his long list, and declared himself the sole emperor of the Roman world, ceasing to recognise Manuel I - a ruler he had previously enjoyed good relations with - as the legitimate heir of Roman authority in Constantinople.





The Battle of Iconium was a last great victory for the aging emperor - he would be dead within a month

© Alamy, Wiki

Frederick returned to the unfinished business in Italy after Pope Adrian made peace with King William I of Sicily. The peace deal granted territory to William that Frederick thought of as his own, while Frederick fiercely opposed the pope's notion that the Holy Roman Empire was a fief of the papacy. A succession of Italian campaigns followed in 1158, 1163, 1166 and 1174, as Frederick repeatedly tried to impose his will on the successor to St Peter.

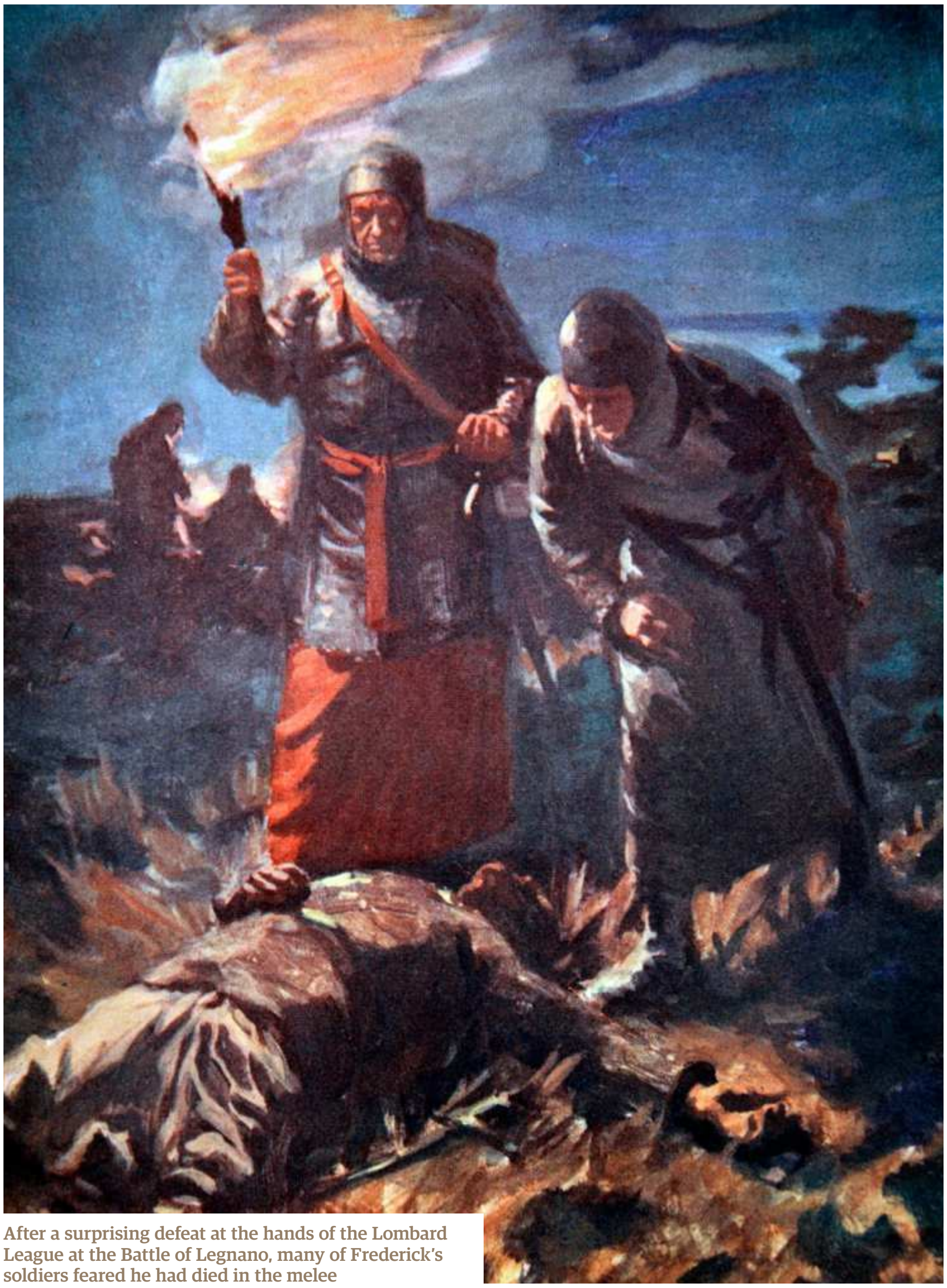
Adrian IV died in 1159, and the political machinations of the papacy led to the election of two rival pontiffs, Alexander III and Victor IV. Both sought Frederick's support, but when Alexander refused a summons to appear before the emperor at Pavia, Frederick named Victor IV as his choice. Alexander responded by excommunicating Frederick and allying with William of Sicily.

Although Frederick was able to quash rebellions in the northern Italian cities and temporarily retake Rome on two occasions, he was still unable to make any headway against the Kingdom of Sicily in the south and faced constant opposition from Pope Alexander, who resided safe from Frederick's clutches outside Italy.

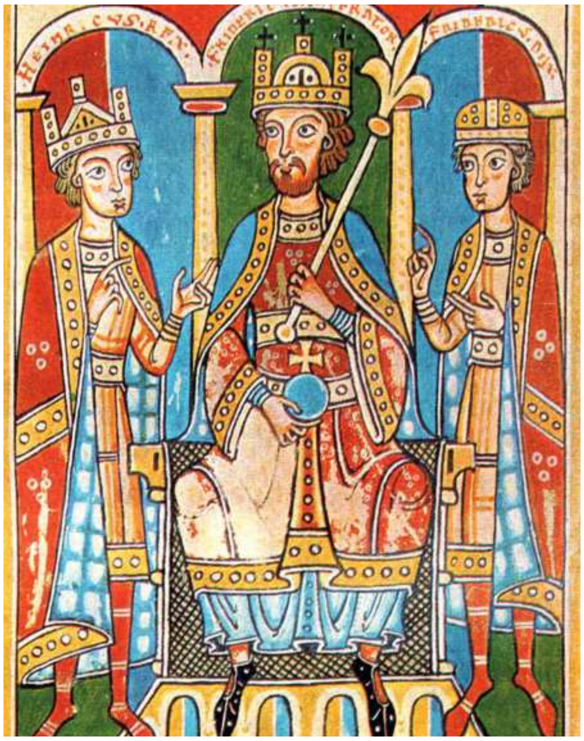
Part of the problem Frederick faced was the mortality of his chosen candidates for the Bishopric of Rome. While Alexander III enjoyed the support of France, England, Sicily, the Crusader states and a number of other kingdoms, Frederick's favourites kept dying and their successors needed to build their own support from scratch. Victor IV died at Lucca in 1164, and his successor, antipope Paschal III, who was enthroned at St Peter's in 1167 with a German army at his back, died of cancer a year later.

Callixtus III became Frederick's next pope of choice, although his claim floundered when Frederick's fifth Italian campaign came to an ignominious end. The invasion slowed when the city of Alessandria survived a long siege by German forces. Legend has it that a quick-witted peasant fed a cow with the last of the city's grain and presented it to Frederick. When the emperor realised that the cow had been fed on precious rations, he decided that the city must still have ample food reserves and broke off the siege.

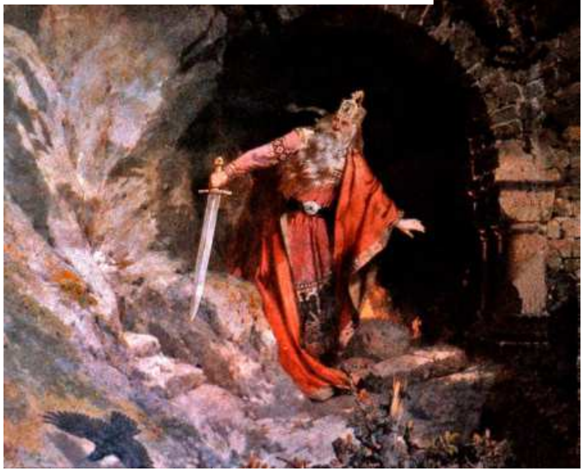
The end of the siege of Alessandria was a surprise, but the real shock was to follow. At the Battle of Legnano, Frederick's army was



After a surprising defeat at the hands of the Lombard League at the Battle of Legnano, many of Frederick's soldiers feared he had died in the melee



According to legend, Barbarossa is not dead but sleeping in a mountain cave until he is called upon to lead Germany to greatness once again



comprehensively defeated by the forces of the north Italian Lombard League. The 54-year-old emperor had thrown himself into the middle of the action but fell to the ground when his horse was wounded; his standard fell with him when the standard bearer was killed.

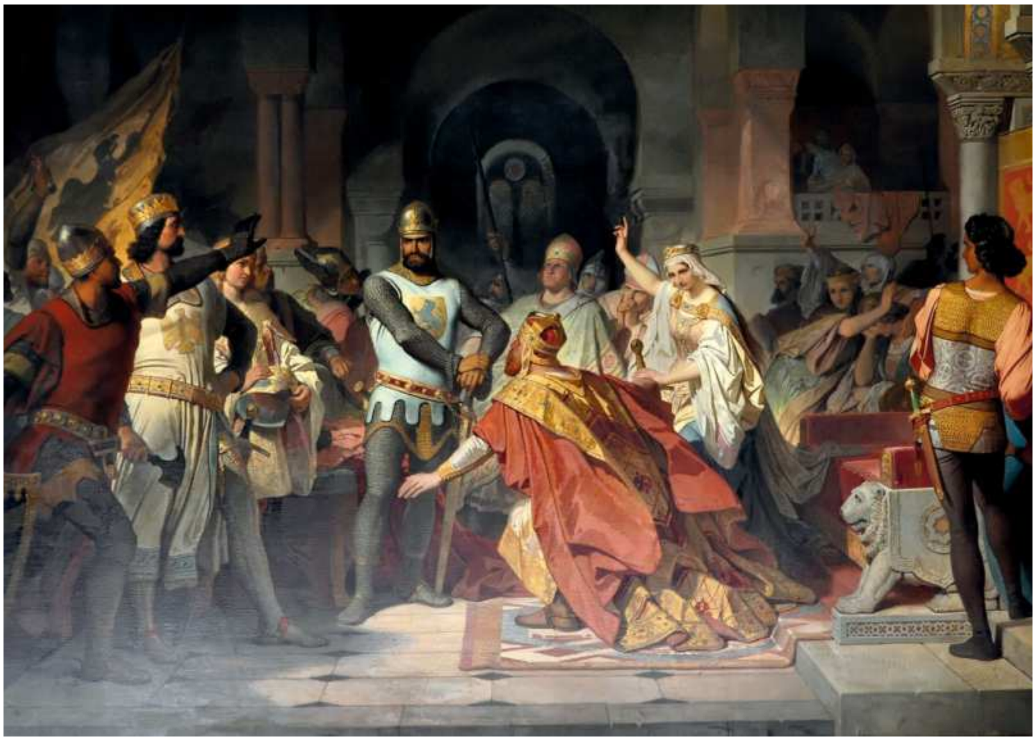
Although Frederick escaped with his life, his hope of finally subduing Italy had perished. Peace negotiations began in which Frederick abandoned the claim of Callixtus III and recognised Alexander III as the true pope. The Treaty of Venice in 1177 officially reconciled the two: Frederick humbled himself before Alexander and acknowledged Alexander's sovereignty over the Papal States, and in return Alexander lifted the decree of excommunication on Frederick. Peace with the Lombard League followed, in which the north Italian cities accepted imperial authority but were granted concessions and freedoms by Frederick.

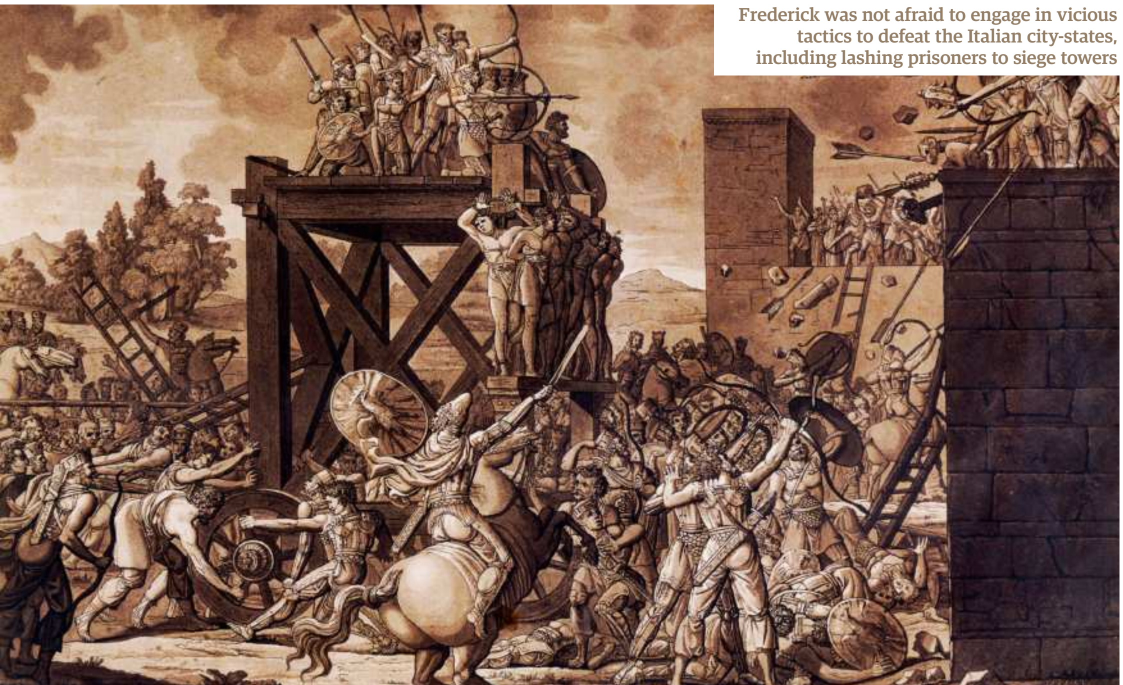
With Italy once more at peace, the aging emperor returned to Germany and his squabbling nobles. Henry the Lion was growing powerful and had refused to back Frederick's latest incursion into Italy, so Frederick found an excuse to strip him of his lands. After a brief conflict Henry was exiled to England for three years and, although eventually allowed to return home, did so as the much-diminished Duke of Brunswick.

By 1188 the Holy Roman Emperor was in his mid-sixties, but he was still happy to take on a new enemy. Concerned by reports of the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin, Frederick decided to take up the cross for the second time in his life and joined the Third Crusade alongside Richard the Lionheart and Philip Augustus.

In 1190, while riding along the Saleph River, Frederick was thrown from his horse and into the icy water. Accounts on his demise vary, but it's believed the shock of the cold caused Frederick to have a heart attack. His armour then dragged him to the riverbed.

Frederick's death in Anatolia was preceded by a final victory at the Battle of Iconium in which the Sultanate of Rum was routed and his capital city sacked. It was fitting that Frederick died in the midst of a military campaign. His adult life was bookended with the crusades, and the decades in between were spent holding together a fractious Germany and conducting seemingly endless campaigns against the city-states of Italy and the pope. Few rulers of the Holy Roman Empire displayed such battlefield prowess, ambition, determination and sheer longevity.





Frederick was not afraid to engage in vicious tactics to defeat the Italian city-states, including lashing prisoners to siege towers

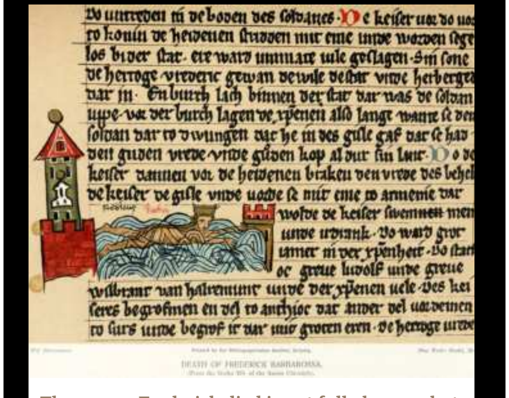
Death on the Saleph

A peaceful death was never likely for the aging warrior

Less than a month after his last great victory at the Battle of Iconium, Frederick I Barbarossa was dead. He did not die in the heat of battle, nor peacefully of old age, but drowned when crossing the Saleph River (now Göksu River) near Silifke Castle in Anatolia. According to some chroniclers his horse stumbled in the current and the emperor was dragged under by his heavy armour. According to others he suffered a heart attack after bathing in the cold water.

Not wishing to bury their leader in enemy territory, Frederick's troops preserved his body in the customary German way – by dismembering and boiling it to remove the flesh from the skeleton. The remains were carried along with the German army in the hope that they might be buried in Jerusalem, but attempts to preserve the soft tissue in vinegar failed. The decomposing flesh was buried in Antioch; the bones were interred in the cathedral of Tyre and the heart and inner organs in Tarsus.

Frederick may have faced down many opponents during his long life, but the one challenge he could not beat was a fast-flowing river.



The reason Frederick died is not fully known, but his death was a blow to the Third Crusade

© Wiki, Getty

HERO OR VILLAIN?

FREDERICK II

The Holy Roman Emperor was renowned for carrying out sadistic experiments, but has this inquisitive mind ahead of its time been wrongly maligned by papal propaganda?

Written by Willow Winsham

One of the most controversial rulers of his time, the 13th-century Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II was known for his grand ambitions and was nicknamed 'stupor mundi', meaning 'the astonishment of the world'. However, he was also embroiled in a life-long clash with the Church, resulting in him being excommunicated four times for his disregard for the pope's opinion. Frederick was infamous for his fascination with science, and the lengths that he would go to in his quest for knowledge both enthralled and appalled his contemporaries.

One of the shadier matters associated with this ruler are the tales told about him by Salimbene di Adam, a contemporary Italian monk. He joined the Franciscan order in 1238 and produced several works, the most relevant to learning more about Frederick being *The Twelve Calamities of Emperor Frederick II*. The purpose of this was to highlight Frederick's faults and immoral nature, including his lack of Christian piety and disinterest in supporting the Church of Rome, and it contains varied and descriptive examples intended to fully illustrate the emperor's wickedness. Among the most horrendous actions the monk attributes to Frederick was that he was guilty of performing a series of atrocious human experiments.

According to Salimbene, on one occasion the ruler had a hapless captive sealed inside a wooden cask or barrel and deprived him of food and water until the unfortunate man eventually, and no doubt excruciatingly, died. As the man drew close to death, a hole was made in the barrel to test whether or not the soul could be seen leaving the body.

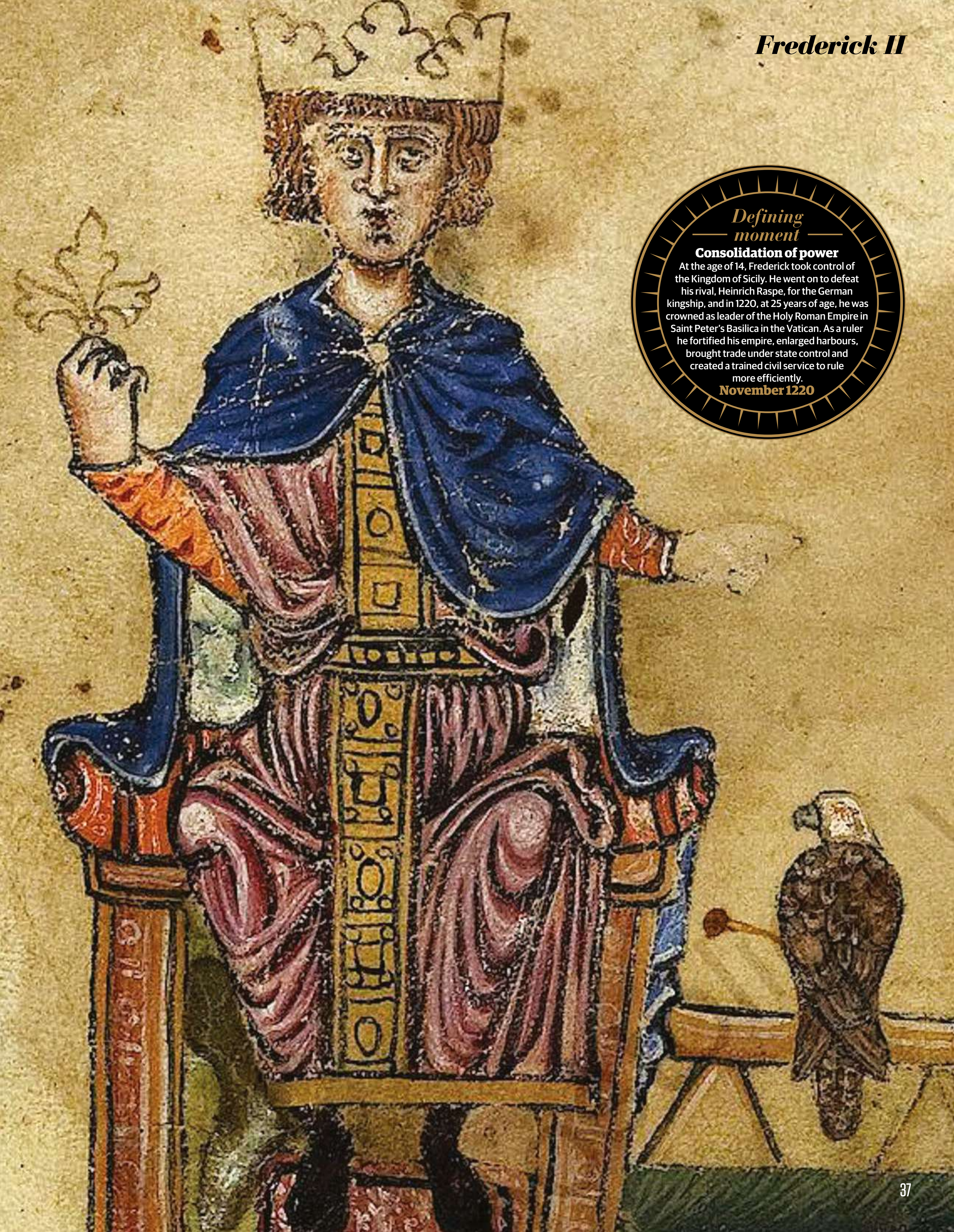
Salimbene also claimed that Frederick ordered two prisoners be given exactly the same dinner. After eating, one of them was then sent out hunting, while the other was told to go to bed and sleep off the large meal he had just ingested. Unknown to them, the emperor was intending to

Defining moment

Ward of the pope

Frederick's parents died a year apart before he was even three years old. While his father, Emperor Henry VI, had been unable to secure him the German crown, his mother had arranged for him to become King of Sicily and he was raised as Pope Innocent III's ward. His early loss and emotionally barren childhood undoubtedly impacted his development, perhaps explaining his short temper and cruelty in later life.

May 1198

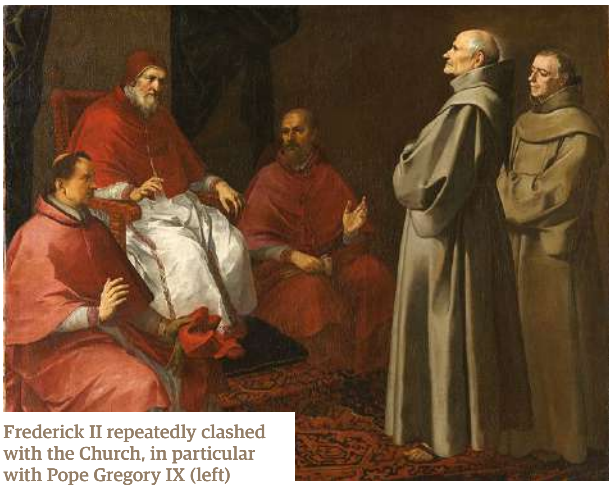


Defining moment

Consolidation of power

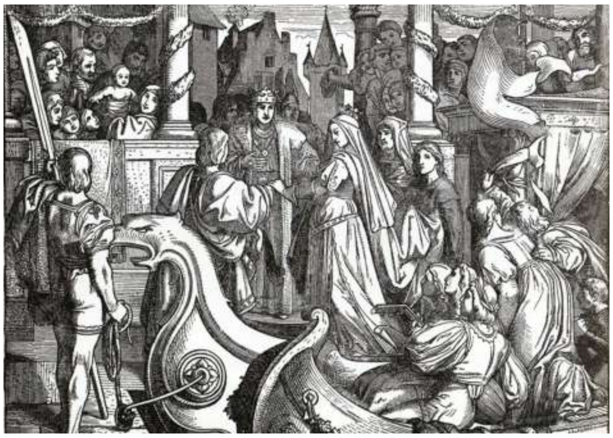
At the age of 14, Frederick took control of the Kingdom of Sicily. He went on to defeat his rival, Heinrich Raspe, for the German kingship, and in 1220, at 25 years of age, he was crowned as leader of the Holy Roman Empire in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. As a ruler he fortified his empire, enlarged harbours, brought trade under state control and created a trained civil service to rule more efficiently.

November 1220



Frederick II repeatedly clashed with the Church, in particular with Pope Gregory IX (left)

A depiction of the 'stupor mundi' on the gold and silver Shrine of Charlemagne, which Frederick himself had built in 1215



Frederick married three times. He wed Isabella of England in July 1235 in the newly captured city of Worms, Germany

"If there is even a grain of truth in Salimbene's reports, the image created of the emperor is a chilling one"

investigate the different effects that exercise and sleep might have on the digestion process. This was achieved in a most brutal manner – a few hours after the men had completed their activities he had both of them killed and disembowelled to examine and compare the contents of their stomachs.

Perhaps the most disturbing of all the experiments gleefully related by Salimbene were the tests that Frederick reputedly had carried out on infants. In his eagerness to determine what language had been given to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, he put a group of babies into the care of nurses who were under strict instructions not to interact with them other than when absolutely necessary. The infants could be fed and bathed but no more, and they were not to be spoken to.

Defining moment

The King of Jerusalem

After being excommunicated for refusing to crusade, Frederick set sail for the Holy Land. However, rather than raise arms, he negotiated with Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt to obtain Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. He crowned himself king of the territories in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Though his bloodless victory impressed other European kings, Pope Gregory IX was less pleased.

June 1228

Tragically for those involved, Frederick never got an answer to the question he posed. The children, starved of any form of affection, warmth and basic interaction, died, quite simply, of a lack of love.

If there is even a grain of truth in Salimbene's reports, the image created of the emperor is a chilling one. But what proof is there for the monk's sensational claims? One thing that is clear about Frederick from the outset is that he had a strong, and at times overwhelming, interest in all matters biological. He established several animal reserves in locations across his widespread kingdom, the most impressive example of which was a habitat for a variety of waterbirds that was maintained at his own expense. Frederick also owned many animals, including lions and elephants, which he liked to take on his travels.

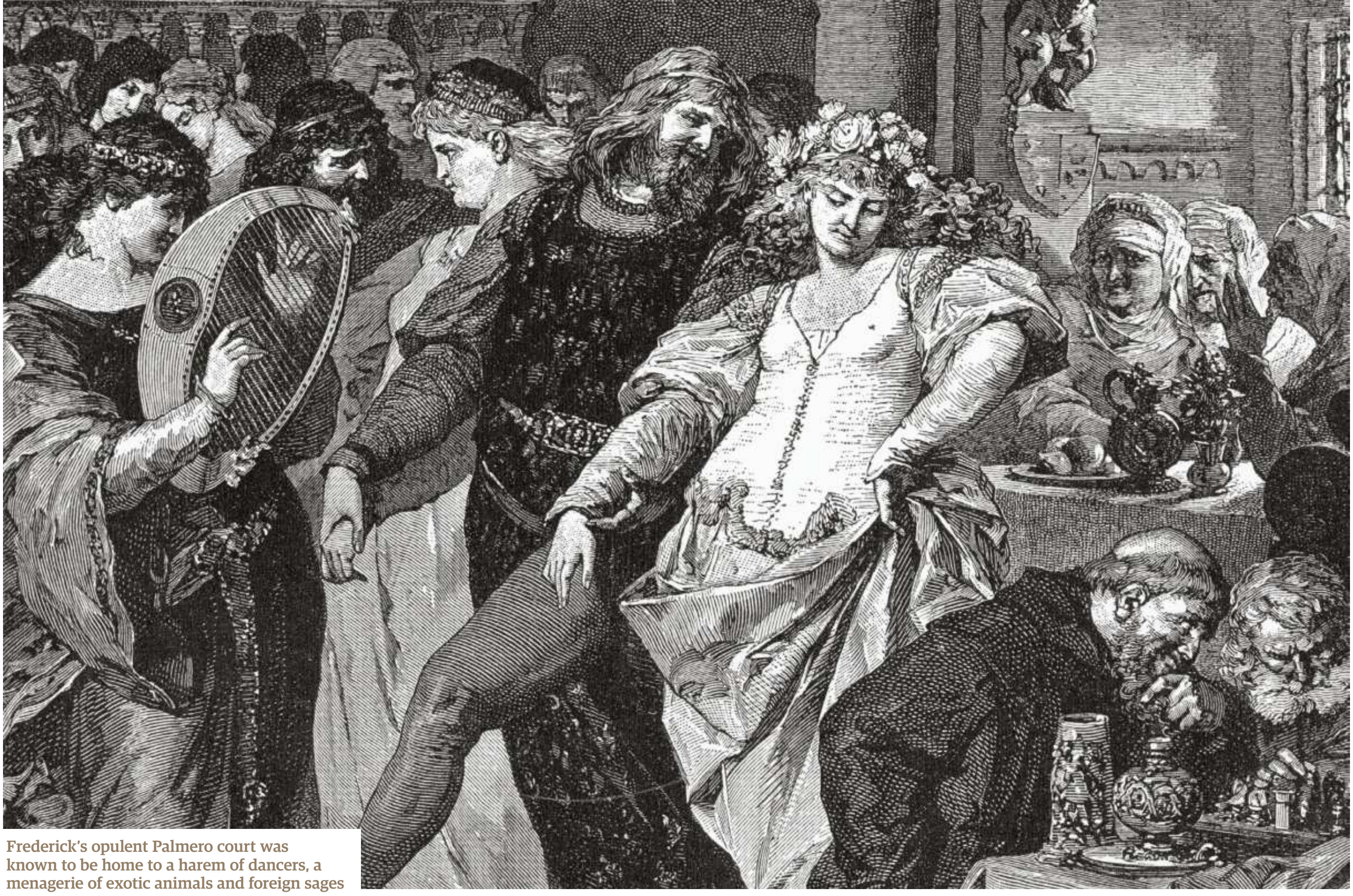
It was also recorded by reputable sources, including Frederick's own writings, that he carried out experiments, though of a less questionable nature than those recorded by Salimbene. One of these involved establishing the longevity of fish.

A copper ring was placed inside a fish's gills before it was released back into the lake that it had come from. According to legend, the very same fish was rediscovered in 1497, the copper ring still in place, identified by a Greek inscription that read, "I am that fish which Emperor Frederick II placed in this lake with his own hand the fifth day of October 1230." Whether or not this was purely apocryphal, it provides yet another example of Frederick's insatiable curiosity.

Frederick was also keenly interested in falconry and published a book on the subject. While standing out as being one of the first of its kind, the text also gives more evidence of the emperor's inquisitive nature, outlining various experiments that he carried out to satisfy his curiosity with the nature and habits of the birds.

At first glance, it would seem that the scientific nature that Frederick was well known for could be an argument for there being truth in Salimbene's accounts. The monk, however, had good reason to be biased against the emperor, and it may be that Salimbene's personal views somewhat coloured his portrayal of Frederick. In an age where religious belief was taken for granted and seen as part and parcel of a ruler's lot, Frederick was a self-professed sceptic when it came to matters of religion, something that was deeply shocking to those around him.

Despite growing up as a ward of the pope, Frederick does not appear to have nurtured a


Frederick's opulent Palmero court was known to be home to a harem of dancers, a menagerie of exotic animals and foreign sages

religious outlook. Throughout his life Frederick was accused of blasphemy and of holding heretical ideas. Showing a blatant disregard for the Church and paying no attention to the sanctions imposed upon him, Frederick was said to have called Moses, Muhammad and even Jesus frauds. Salimbene, a man of God and staunch supporter of the papacy, saw this as further evidence that Frederick was a dangerous man who needed to be stopped.

Another argument against the reliability of Salimbene's account is that the monk never actually met Frederick. He only ever caught a glimpse of the emperor during a visit to Parma he had no connection with Frederick, so his treatise was likely based on second-hand accounts or was a pure invention. But the monk was not the only one to view Frederick in a less than flattering light – Pope Gregory IX called him the predecessor to the Antichrist, and he was also named by the poet Dante as belonging to the sixth region of Hell, assigned to heretics.

Defining moment

Struggle with the papacy

Frederick's openness in his heretical views and merciless expansion of his empire led him onto a collision course with Pope Gregory IX, who was concerned that the Papal States were being encircled. The pope excommunicated Frederick (again) in 1239, but this only worsened relations. The emperor invaded Lombardy, burning Umbria to the ground, and he only didn't attack Rome because Gregory died.

March 1239

There are also further cases for Frederick's experiments being true. It has been asserted that the stomach-churning nature of Frederick's alleged experiments is the very point that argues for them being true – they were so terrible and out of the ordinary that it was therefore unlikely that the details were fabricated. At least in the case of the language experiment, Frederick was not the only ruler said to have had interests in that area. The Egyptian Pharaoh Psamtik I apparently carried out a similar test in the 6th century BCE, as did King James IV of Scotland in the late 1400s.

So, was the emperor the monster he has so often been painted as,? Even Salimbene, with his open criticism, could not deny that Frederick had his good points, admitting that he was known to be charming and intelligent, well mannered and hard working. In 1224, Frederick founded the University of Naples – today known as the University of Naples Federico II in honour of its founder – and he was known as a patron of the arts and culture both within his own lands and beyond. Frederick should also be credited with promoting good hygiene practices within the army centred around safely conducting medical procedures such as bloodletting, adhering to a good diet and bathing regularly.

Although his lack of faith was viewed with suspicion, it meant that Frederick showed marked tolerance where others did not. For example, he not only refused to massacre Muslims when given the opportunity but took them into his own armed forces and even his personal bodyguard. The emperor likewise made use of Sicilian Jews, many of whom had been expelled from elsewhere, in translating Arabic and Greek texts, establishing Sicily as the promoter and preserver of Eastern writings and their transmission to Western Europe.

When Frederick died, some of his followers actually believed the stupor mundi might come back to life. While his sarcophagus is actually in Palermo Cathedral, tales from the 13th century identify Mount Etna as the emperor's final resting place. With intriguing similarities to the King Arthur legend, the story went that Frederick was merely sleeping within the mountain, waiting for the right time to return to the world.

A controversial figure in life and death, Frederick remains that way to this day, and a statue of him has been the subject of dispute in the square in Jesi, where he was born. Monstrous tyrant or enlightened modernst? The truth of Frederick's experiments will never be known, the real emperor behind the legend remaining, for now, out of reach.

Hero or villain?

HEROISM ● ● ● ● ● 6 ○ ○ ○ ○

An inquiring mind ahead of his time, the few experiments we have first-hand accounts of were no where near as cruel as have been claimed.

VILLAINY ● ● ● ● ● ● 7 ○ ○ ○

Rumoured experiments aside, Frederick was known to dish out cruel punishments and ruled despotically, modelling himself on the classical Roman emperors.

LEGACY ● ● ● ● ● 6 ○ ○ ○ ○

While the ruler's royal line quickly faded after his death, the stupor mundi lives on in the Italian university he founded as well as in more spurious legends.

© Alamy, Getty Images

REFORMATION & RENAISSANCE

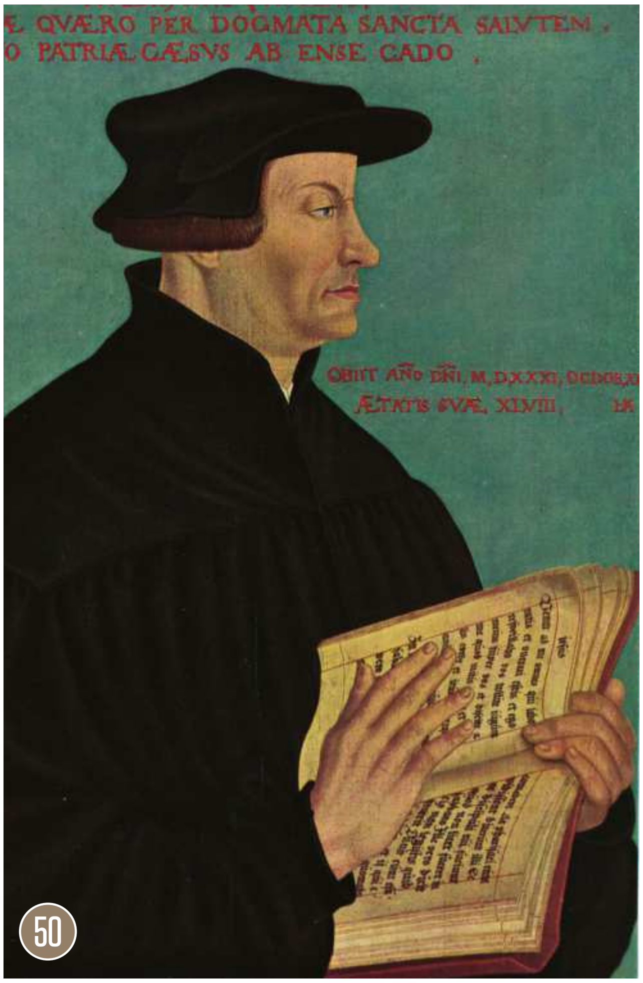
42 **The Renaissance in Europe**
After centuries of stagnation, an explosion of art, culture and literature revolutionised life in Europe

46 **Timeline of the Reformation**
Relive the key events of the Protestant Reformation, a religious earthquake that shook the Holy Roman Empire to its core

48 **Survival guide to the Reformation**
Find out who to befriend, who to avoid and where to seek refuge during this turbulent time of religious upheaval

50 **How to create a Reformation pamphlet**
Master the arts of printing, preaching and propaganda and spread the word of Protestantism far and wide

52 **The German Peasants' War**
Discover why the peasantry of 1520s Germany rose up against their landlords, starting a brief war that would leave 100,000 dead



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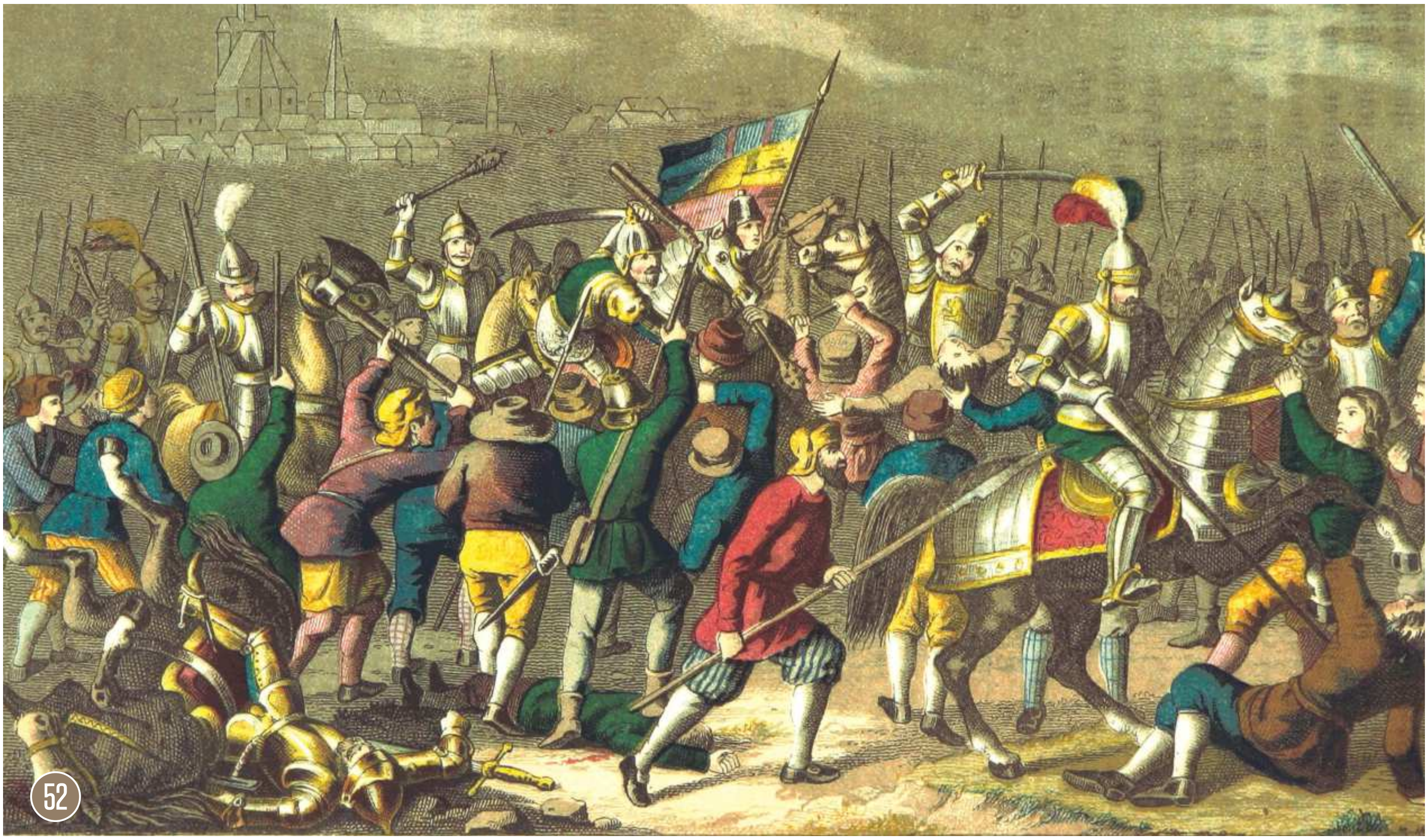

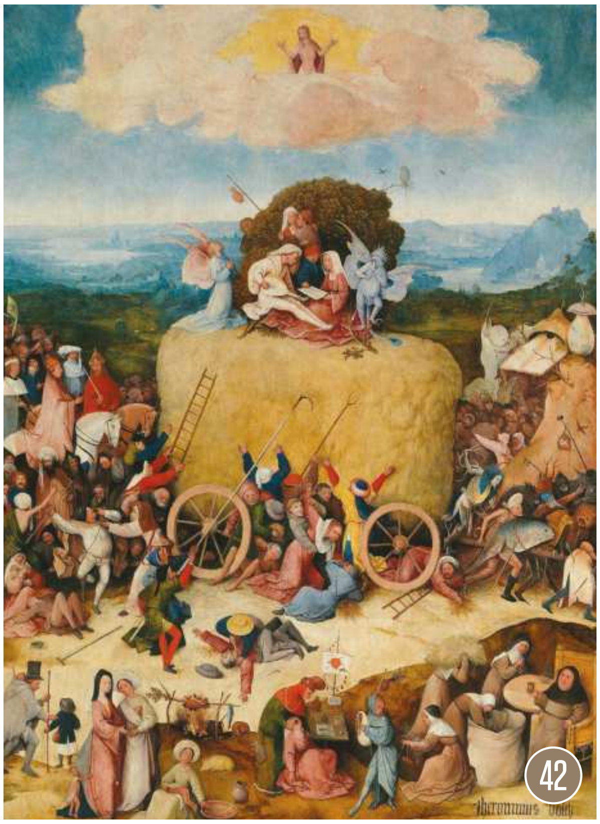
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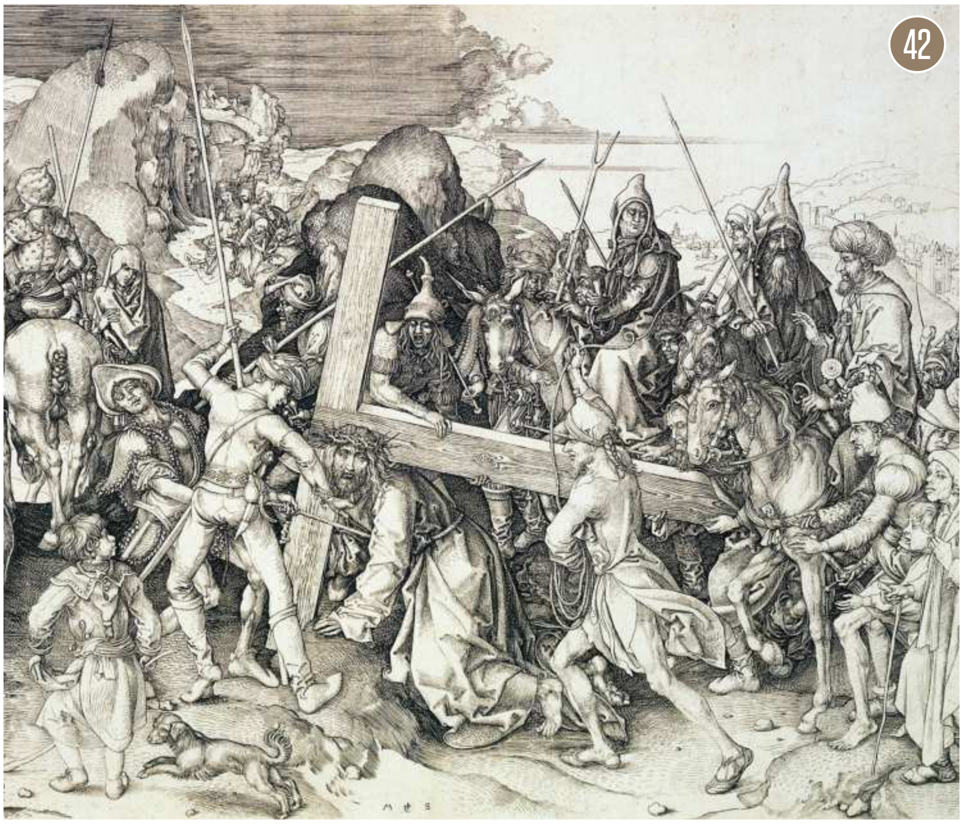

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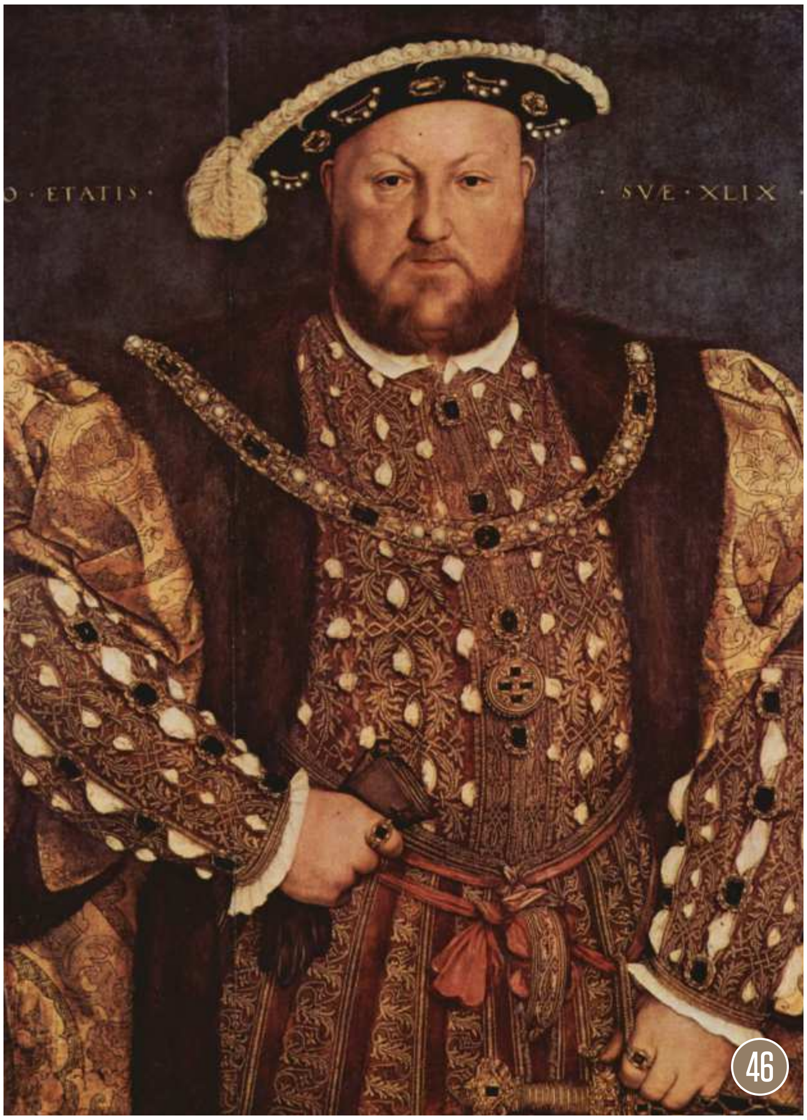
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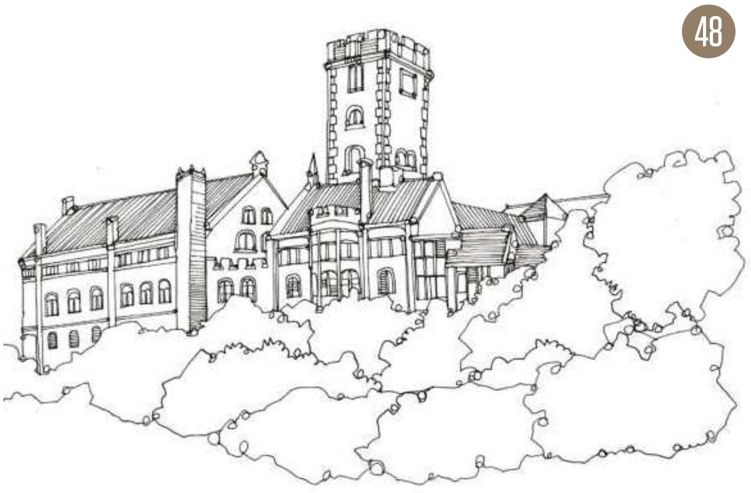

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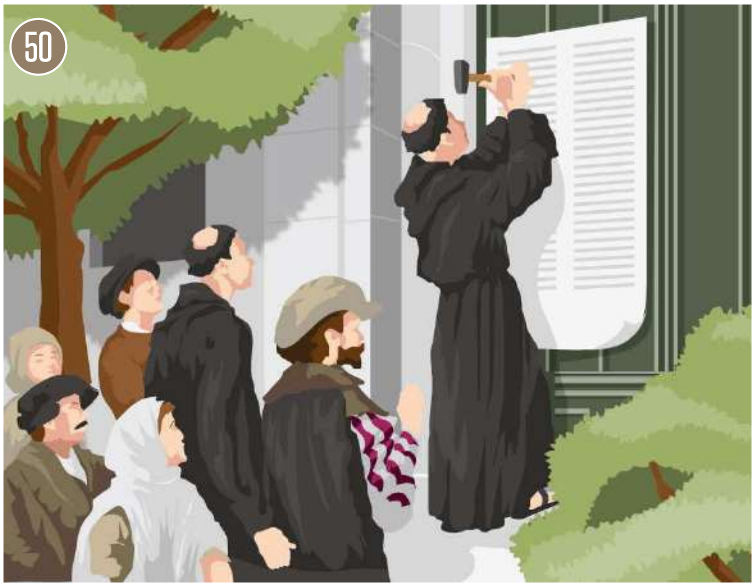

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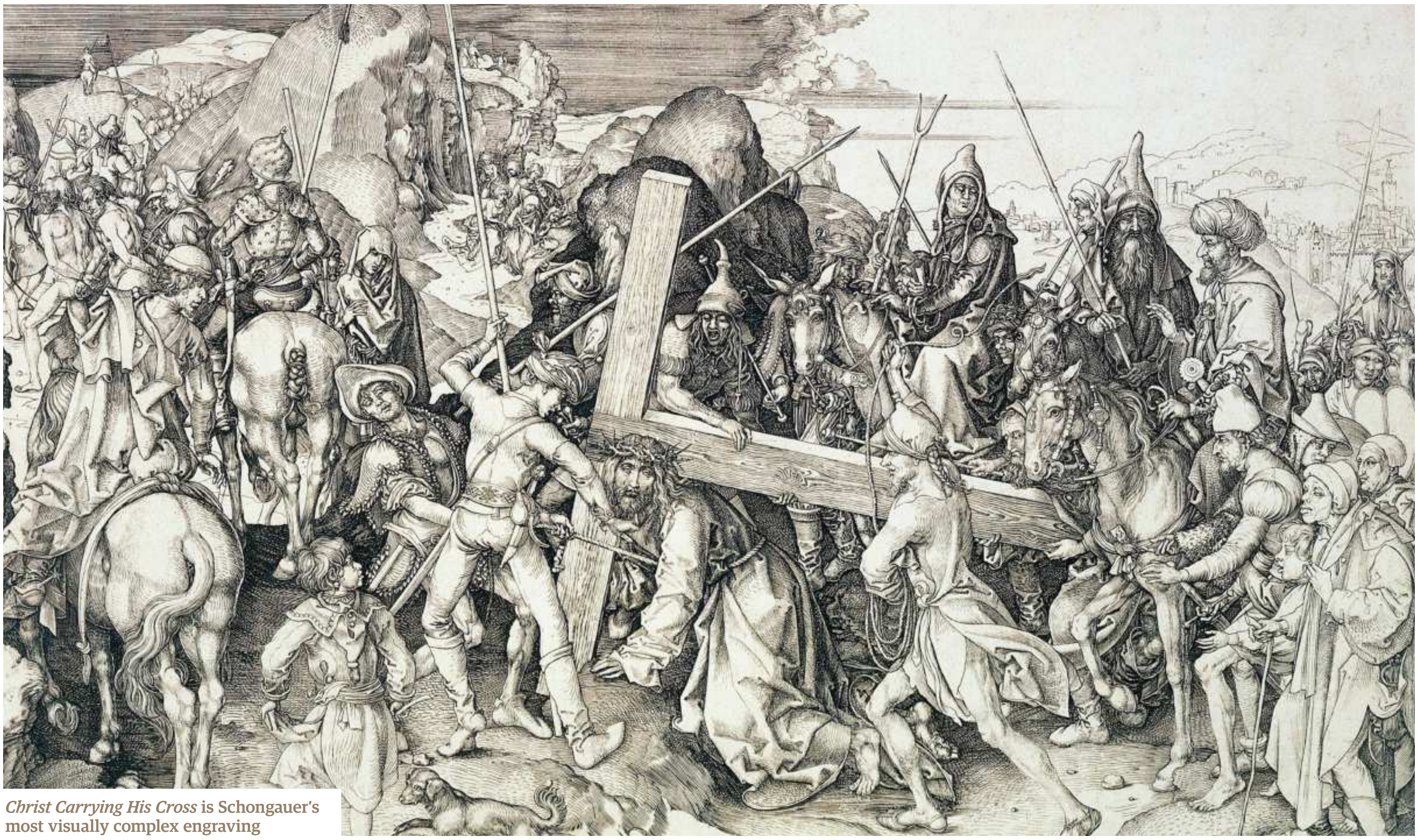


Christ Carrying His Cross is Schongauer's most visually complex engraving

1300–1600

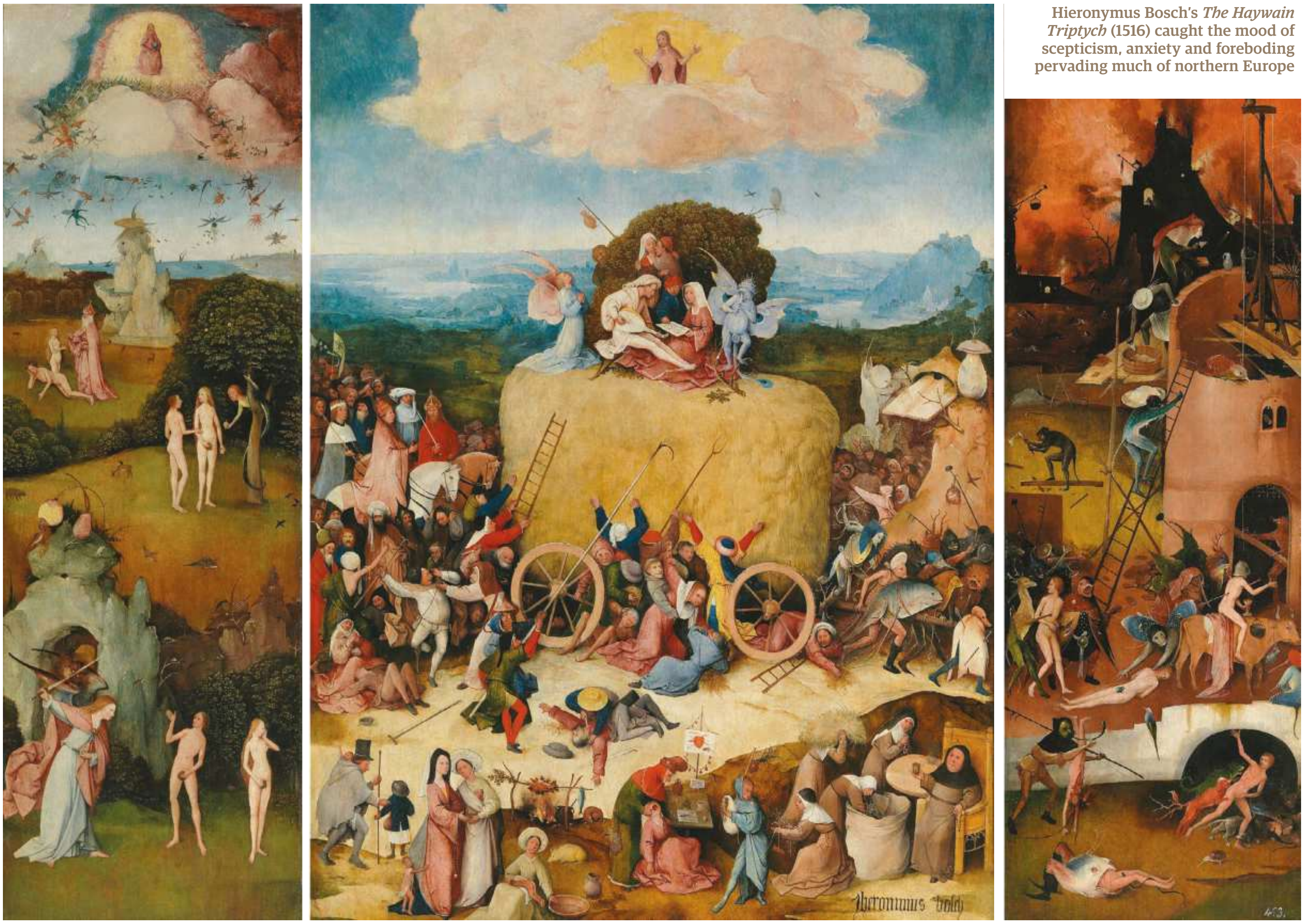
THE RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE

For three centuries the Holy Roman Empire played host to an explosion of new art, literature and architecture as Europe rediscovered its cultural heritage

Written by Derek Wilson

While architects of the stamp of Donato Bramante were designing neoclassical churches and public buildings in Rome, Milan, Florence and other Italian cities, in the north, Gothic style reached its apogee in the High Gothic. The magnificent, graceful cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches built throughout northern Europe were, for the most part, ongoing projects, the work of generations of master masons rather than individual architects, working to preconceived designs. Between 1100 and 1550, these buildings grew in response to new needs and fresh ideas.

It was in England that the potential of Gothic architecture was ultimately achieved in the Perpendicular style. Increased wealth based largely on the wool trade enabled new churches and chapels to be built with breathtaking daring. Between 1450 and 1550, several ecclesiastical buildings were conceived in toto, as complete, unified works of art. Windows became much wider, the glass supported almost miraculously by slender stone columns. Pillars, now smaller in



Hieronymus Bosch's *The Haywain Triptych* (1516) caught the mood of scepticism, anxiety and foreboding pervading much of northern Europe

> **"By 1500, print shops were to be found in 270 cities throughout Europe"**

girth, resembled soaring pine trees whose branches spread out overhead. The analogy is apt as masons' work had an organic inspiration taken from the forests that still covered much of the country.

When we turn from the monumental to the miniscule, we discover the same close involvement with nature reflected in the work of manuscript illumination. Psalters and books of hours (containing prayers, gospel passages, psalms and other aids to devotion) had their borders lovingly decorated with flowers and intertwined fronds, radiant with gilding and bright colours.

The most revolutionary innovation of the Renaissance era began at Mainz in the German Rhineland when Johannes Gutenberg started producing printed sheets in 1439. The impact of cheap, mass-produced books made the interchange of ideas among scholars easy. It also led rapidly to the woodblock printing of pictures to accompany text and as standalone illustrations. By 1500, print shops were to be found in 270 cities throughout Europe. They completely changed the way people thought. Some books were highly subversive of European culture and institutions. Sebastian Brant (1457–1521) of Strasbourg mocked contemporary institutions in his *Ship Of Fools*, and Dutchman Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), the leading humanist scholar of the age, followed suit with *In Praise Of Folly*. Both were bestsellers. Their mood was caught by Hieronymus Bosch's (1460–1516) *The Haywain Triptych*, which depicted all sorts of people trundling the wagon towards inevitable doom. Such ideas paved the way for the Reformation.

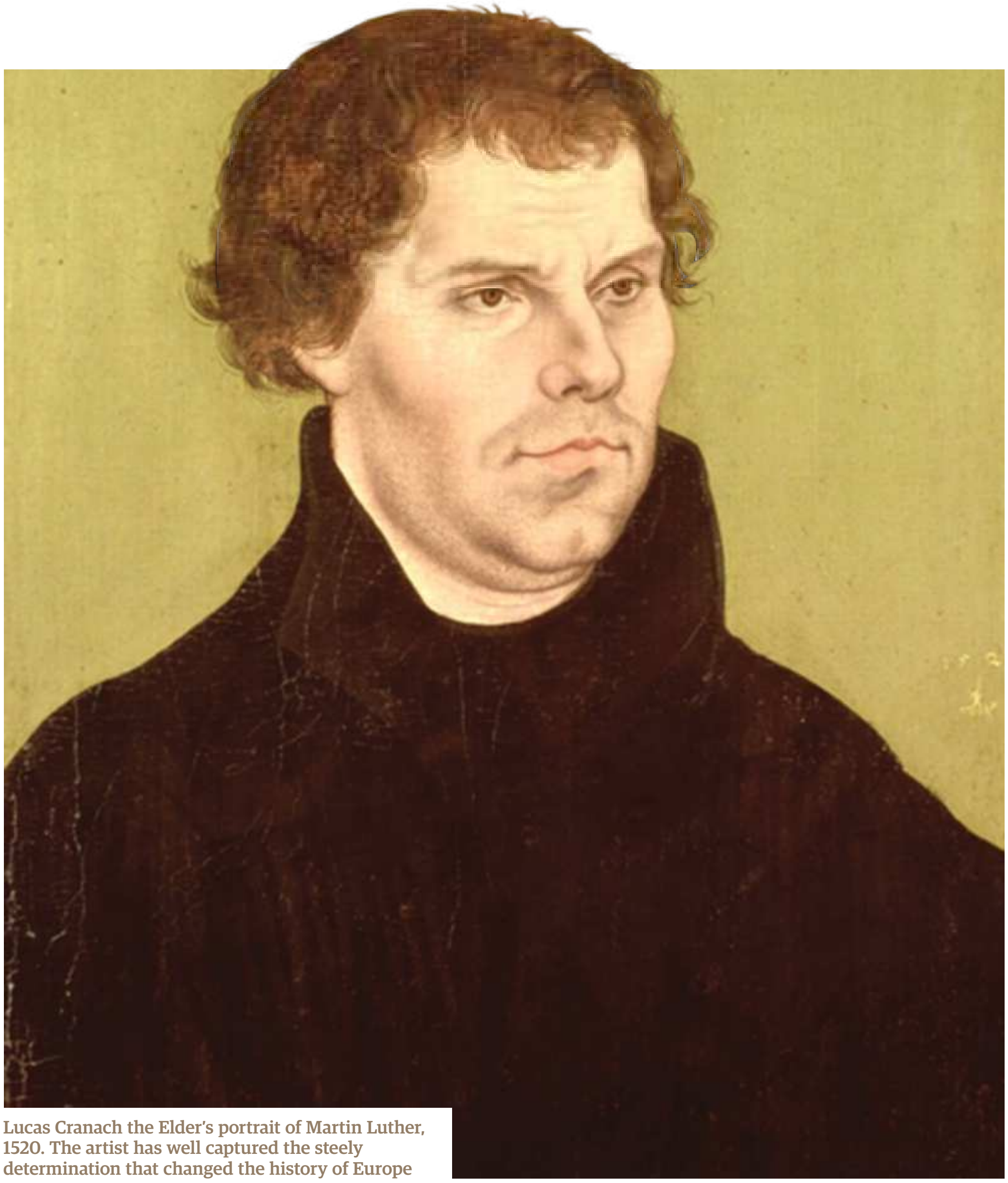
Among the early masters of woodblock and copperplate engraving was Martin Schongauer (c.1445–1491) of Colmar in Alsace. Michelangelo was one of his many admirers. When we look at his *Road To Calvary* it is not difficult to see why. In a space of 27.9 by 42.2 centimetres, he has arranged more than 50 figures, each with its own distinct function. Yet the page is not crammed with a jumble of men, women, children and animals. The artist creates an illusion of movement, while the fallen Christ remains the centre of the composition.

The greatest print maker of the Renaissance was Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). His frightening version of *The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse* (1498) is well known, but later works display his increasing mastery of a difficult medium. With only a group of burins (engravers' cutting tools), the challenges were considerable: how to display various textures, show the play of light and shade, outline the contours of human and animal bodies and so on.

He worked in various mediums – pen and ink, watercolour and oil paint, as well as engraving – and his prodigious output embraced religious works, portraiture, animal studies, mythology and landscapes. He was, in fact, one of the first to treat landscape as a subject on its own, rather than as a background to the portrayal of religious events.

Dürer's home town of Nuremberg had strong contacts with the Republic of Venice. The road between the two cities was the main mercantile link between north and south. Dürer visited Venice twice during the early years of the 16th century and executed commissions there. He met and learned from some of the Italian masters with whom he long remained in correspondence. He was particularly influenced by Mantegna and Raphael (who had, at last, cracked the problem of perspective in such works as *The School Of Athens*). But the learning process was not a one-way street; Dürer was widely respected and copied by his peers south of the Alps.

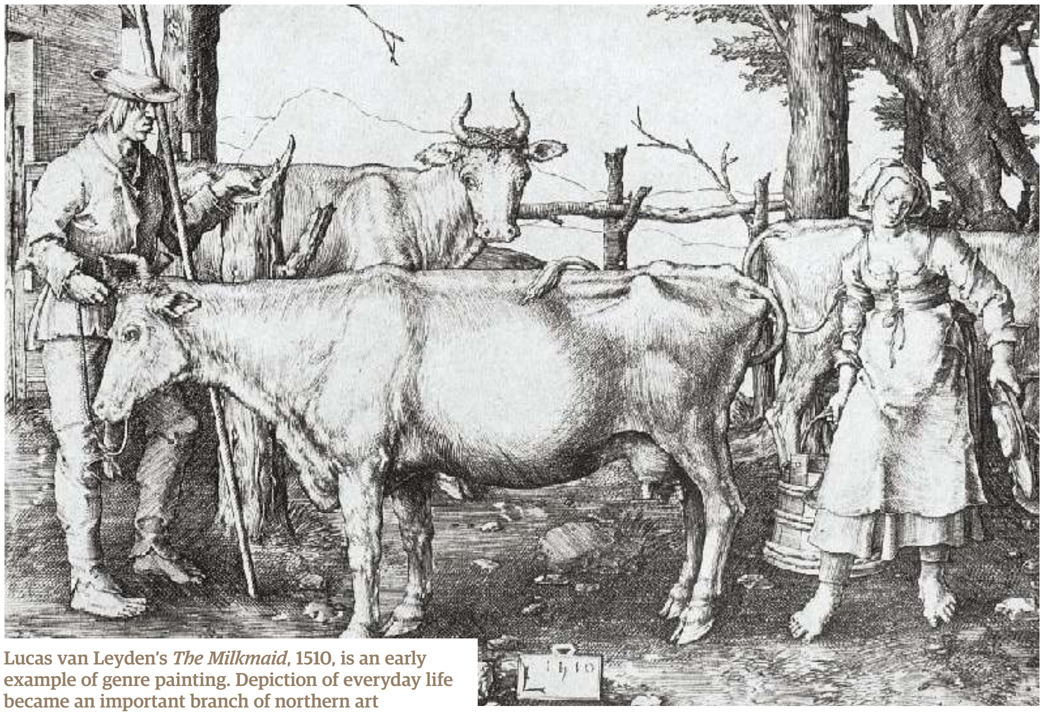
> "Commercial and artistic networks ensured the sharing of ideas"



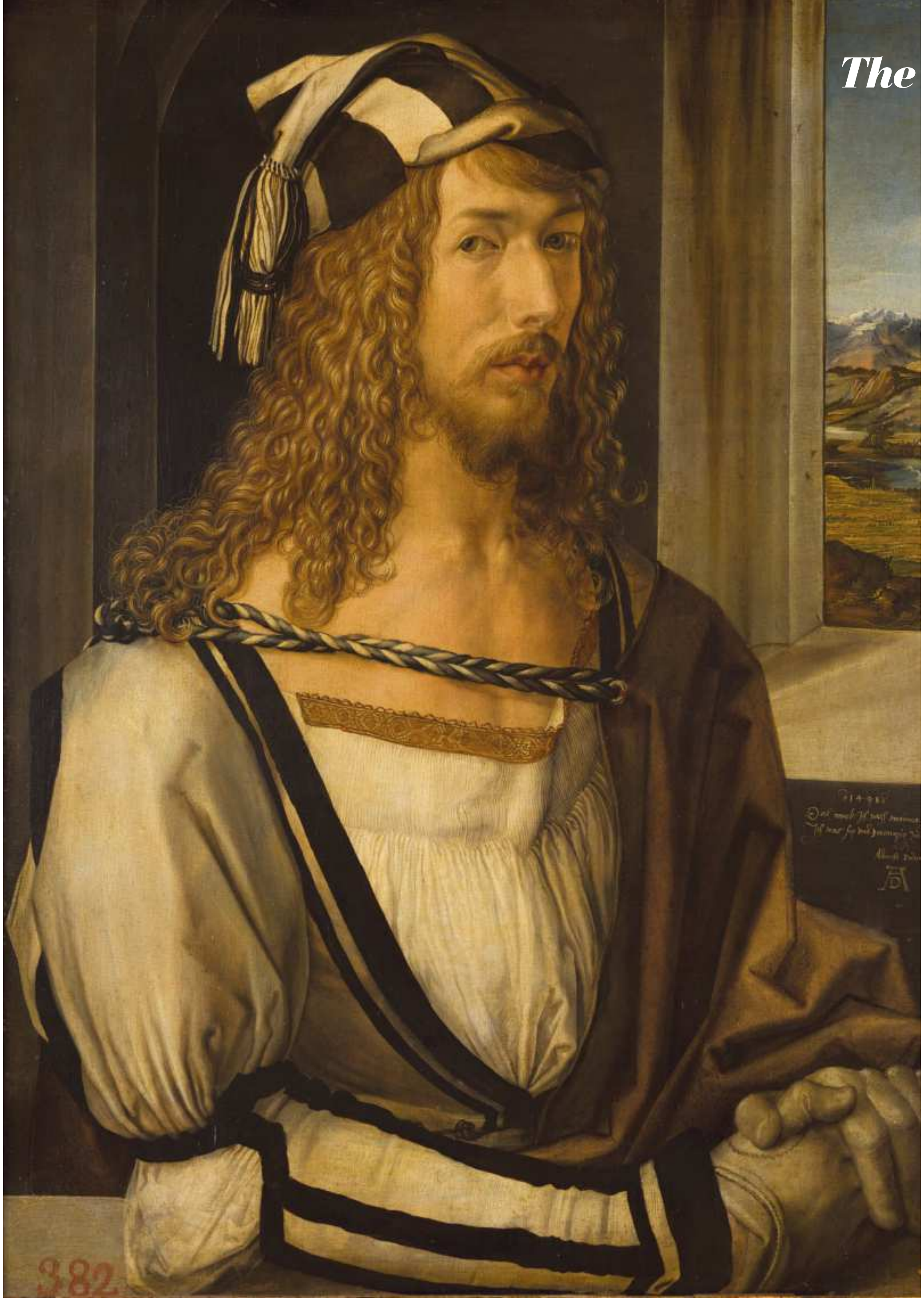
Lucas Cranach the Elder's portrait of Martin Luther, 1520. The artist has well captured the steely determination that changed the history of Europe

Dürer's involvement in the international art scene also took him to the Netherlands in 1520-21. What Venice was to Mediterranean and eastern commerce, Antwerp was to the cross-Channel trade with England and the new Atlantic routes now being opened up by Spanish and Portuguese mariners. Here, eager patrons were to be found among the growing middle class, and Dürer was far from being the only foreign artist drawn there. Several Italians were among the artistic communities in Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels and other cities. The existence of both commercial and artistic networks ensured the sharing of new ideas. In 1506, when a Flemish wool merchant visiting Florence saw Michelangelo's latest version of the *Madonna And Child*, he bought it and had it shipped back to his local church in Bruges.

Another German artist who followed a career not dissimilar to Dürer's was Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543). His home was in Augsburg, the financial centre of Europe, dominated by the banking families of Fugger and Welser. Hans was born into a family of artists, which meant that he and his elder brother were brought up in their father's atelier, working on commissions for everything from altarpieces and jewellery designs



Lucas van Leyden's *The Milkmaid*, 1510, is an early example of genre painting. Depiction of everyday life became an important branch of northern art

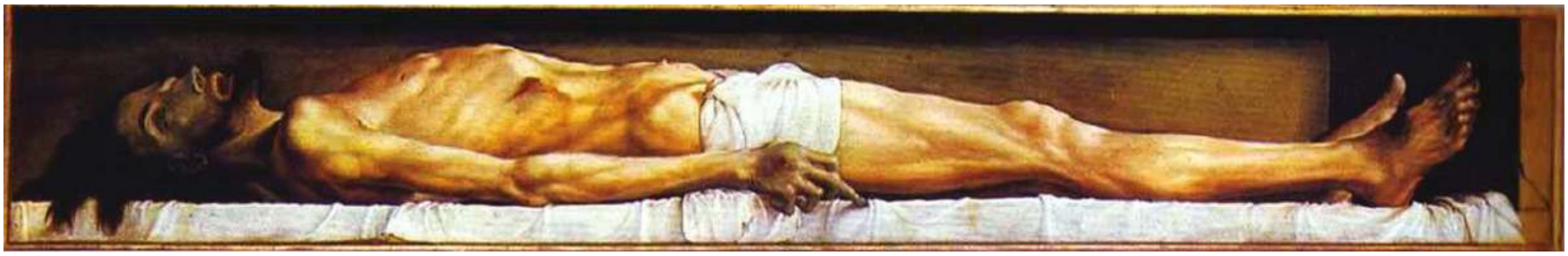


to trade signboards and decorated house fronts. In 1516, bankruptcy forced the family to move to Basel. In this liberal, free-thinking city, young Hans, who was more talented than his father, found an atmosphere conducive to his advancement. Erasmus made his home there, and was only one of several scholars and artists of all persuasions who congregated there. But times were changing.

In 1517 in distant Saxony, a monk called Martin Luther mounted a challenge to Catholic dogma that was the beginning of the Reformation. Hans junior was now a young man whose precocious gifts were resulting in a variety of commissions. But the market was changing rapidly. As Protestantism spread, its more extreme advocates were proclaiming that religious art was idolatry. One of the cities that fell under their control was Basel. This put a distinct dampener on the demand for religious works, so Holbein had to look further afield for a patron. Thanks to Erasmus, who wrote a letter of recommendation to his friend, Thomas More, Holbein was well received in England in 1526. He spent most of the rest of his life there, becoming official painter to Henry VIII and producing the superb series of portraits of the king and members of his court that we know so well.

The impact of the Reformation on art was twofold. As conflict grew between Catholic and Protestant states, art became a propaganda vehicle. Holbein was one, but only one, artist who produced, at government behest, prints lampooning the pope and illustrations for vernacular Bibles. In Germany, Lucas Cranach (1472–1553) brought painting to the aid of the new theology with works such as *The Law And The Gospel*, seeking to counteract the imagery that had been used for centuries by the old church to implant Lutheran doctrine in the minds of worshippers.

The other result was the divorce of sacred and secular, which allowed the development of subject matter such as portraits, landscapes, still life and genre works (scenes from everyday life).



Hans Holbein the Younger: *The Dead Christ* (1520–22)

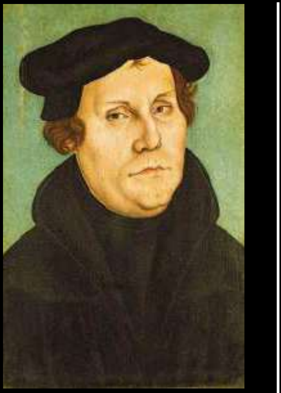
This is Renaissance realism at its most direct and forceful. Traditional depictions of post-Crucifixion scenes had been intent on conveying different messages. When painters, at the behest of their ecclesiastical clients, portrayed the 'descent from the Cross' or the 'entombment', they showed distraught disciples and Jesus' mother caring reverently for the body. They invited the beholder to identify with those first followers of Christ, the original members of the Church. They suggested the viewer's appropriate response. Holbein would have none of this. He presents stark reality and leaves the spectator to make of it what he or she will. He asks the question: What happened between Good Friday and Easter Sunday? The answer is death. The figure lying in a coffin-shaped space might be any man. Corpses were occasionally dragged out of the Rhine. Perhaps this was one such, fortuitously available for Holbein to study. Perhaps he found his model in an anatomy school. The message was simple but profound: this God-man died. This underlines Christ's full humanity and makes the Resurrection more remarkable. Here, Holbein shows himself to be a man of Renaissance and of the emerging Reformation, one turned away from Medieval imagery to locate religious events in the real world. The other stressed the importance of the plain Bible text, unadorned by theological accretions. Renaissance realism has different aspects. It may be simply portraying something accurately, making it familiar. Or it may startle the viewer into a new understanding. In the north, there was a long tradition of strange, sometimes gruesome religious images. Holbein brings these two realisms together, inviting the viewer's personal response. That is why this painting has had such an impact down the centuries.

The Protestant Reformation

How a single act of defiance sparked a wildfire of destruction and religious reform that swept through Europe and changed the world forever

MARTIN LUTHER'S DEFIANCE

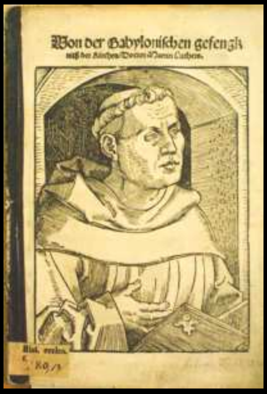
Luther posts his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg in protest at some of the Church's practices, including the sale of indulgences as a means of raising money.



1517

A COLLISION COURSE WITH ROME

Luther publishes and circulates a damning pamphlet in which he discusses the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, as well as openly criticising both the Church and the pope.



1520

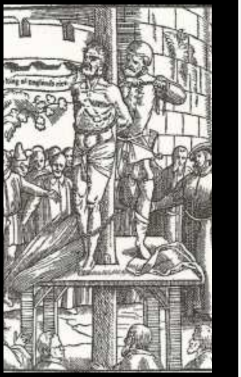
THE ACT OF SUPREMACY

Henry VIII instructs Thomas Cromwell to push through an act to make him Head of the Church in England. All ties with Rome are broken.

1534

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Thomas More refuses to accept Henry as Head of the Church and is executed. William Tyndale is found guilty of heresy for his bible translation and burned at the stake.



1535-6

DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES

Took **4 YEARS** to complete

A total of about **376** monasteries

For all monasteries with a revenue of less than **£200** per year

1536

JOHN CALVIN

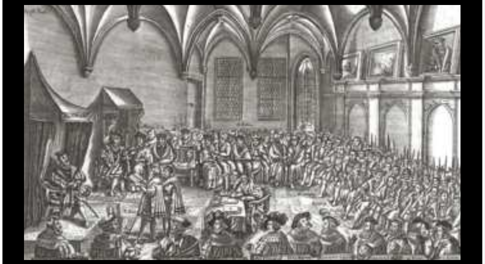
John Calvin publishes his version of reform, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Catholic Church is now under attack from different factions of reformers with very differing views.

After being tied to a stake, Tyndale was strangled before being burned

1536

THE PEACE OF AUGSBURG

This treaty ends conflict between the Holy Roman Empire and the Schmalkaldic League of Lutheran Princes. Lutheranism is to be tolerated and is now on track to becoming properly recognised in Europe.



1555

PROTESTANTISM COMES TO SCOTLAND

John Knox, a staunch follower of Calvin, is central to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. England returns to Protestantism under Elizabeth I following Mary I's Catholic reign.

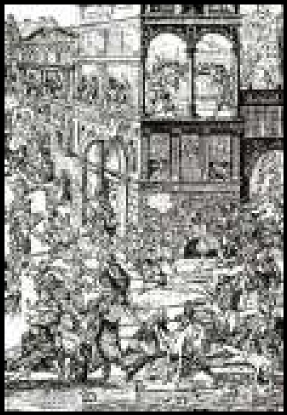
1559

FRANCE AT WAR WITH ITSELF

The French Religious Wars are actually individual conflicts **EIGHT**

As many as **4,000** Huguenots are executed at one time

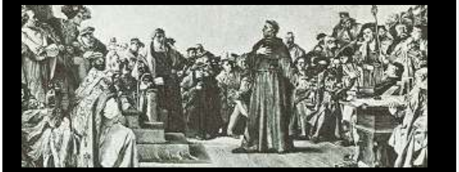
By the time the Edict of Nantes ends the conflict nearly **4 MILLION** are dead



1562-1598

THE DIET OF WORMS

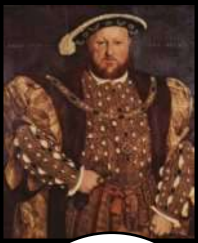
Summoned to answer questions before the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, Luther's actions are deemed unacceptable and he is condemned as a heretic. He is excommunicated by the pope.



1521

HENRY VIII ATTACKS LUTHER

In answer to Luther's attack on the Church, Henry writes his own pamphlet *Septem Sacramentorum*, defending the Catholic Church. A grateful pope gives Henry the title 'Defender of the Faith'.



1521 – Frederick the Wise saves Luther by taking him to Wartburg Castle, protecting him from raging Catholics

1521

A QUESTION OF NUMBERS

Martin Luther challenges the **7** sacraments of the Church

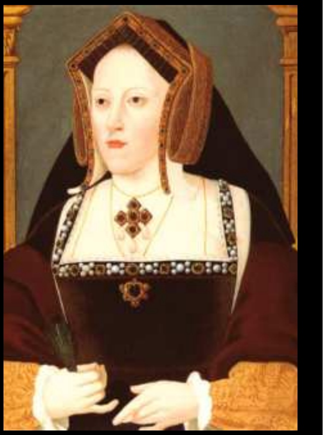
Calvin sets out **5** principles of theology

The Augsburg Confession consists of **28** ARTICLES of Lutheran Doctrine presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

1517-1536

HENRY EXCOMMUNICATED

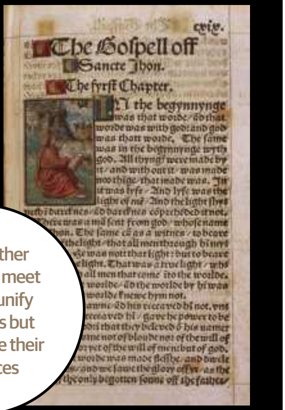
Following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII begins his own path of action in direct conflict with the pope. Despite being called a 'Defender of the Faith', he is excommunicated by the pope.



1533

TYNDALE'S BIBLE PUBLISHED

In direct conflict with the Catholic Church's practice of services in Latin, William Tyndale publishes the first English translation. Those able to read can now question the wording and the Church's authority.



cxix.

The Goſpell off

Sancte Jhon.

The fyrſt Chapter.

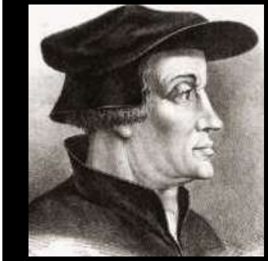
IN the begynnynge was that worde/ ād that worde was with god: and god was thatt worde. The ſame was in the begynnynge wyth god. All thyngꝭ were made by it/ and with out it/ was made noo thige/ that made was. In it was lyfe/ And lyfe was the light of mē/ And the light ſhyneth ī darcknes/ ād darcknes cōprehēded it not.

1529 – Luther and Zwingli meet to try and unify Protestants but cannot agree their differences

1526

ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT IS BORN

Inspired by Luther's dissent, the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli forms the Anabaptists, denouncing the doctrine of baptism in children and advocating for adult baptisms when they are old enough to confess their sins.



1525

THE EDICT OF NANTES

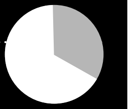
Following the persecution of the Protestant Huguenots, King Henry IV of France grants them religious toleration. It brings civil order but is revoked by Henry's grandson, Louis, in 1685.

1560 – The Geneva Bible is the first to be mechanically printed and mass-produced

1598

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The war actually lasts 29 YEARS, 11 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS & 1 DAY



Between **25-40%** of the German population are killed

The Holy Roman Empire consists of approximately **1,000** semi-autonomous states

1618-1648

THIRTY YEARS' WAR ENDS

The Treaty of Westphalia ends a destructive conflict between Catholics and Protestants from across Europe – mainly in Germany. It changes the European map and religious tolerance forever.

1648

How to survive

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The roots of the Protestant Reformation are firmly set in early 16th-century Germany, and its international reach revolutionised religion across the world. With the Catholic Church's seemingly infinite power, its desires were more than just religious. For a pretty penny, a priest would sell you 'indulgences'; he'd pardon your sins to reduce the length of time you'd have to spend in purgatory.

Across the world, different people took issue with Catholic dominance, with Henry VIII perhaps the most famous of all dissenters. It all kicked off in Germany in 1517, however, with Martin Luther, a disgruntled Augustinian monk. Luther's activism may have cost him his reputation, but it brought about a public awakening to the Church's many misdemeanours. Protestantism was born, and it left a trail of religious pandemonium in its wake that shook Catholicism to its core.

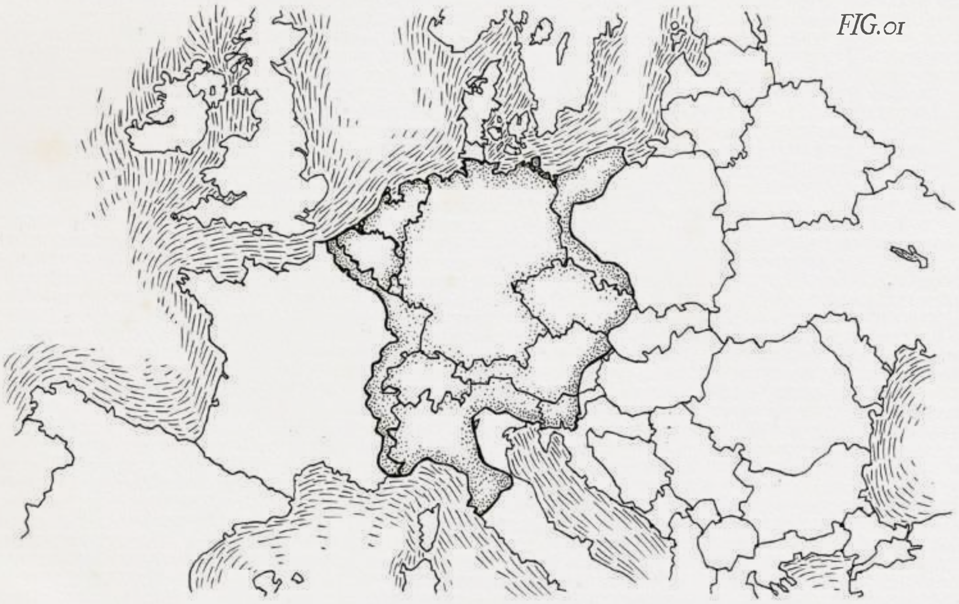


FIG.01

WHERE TO STAY

Having friends in high places certainly helps when you're exiled, and you'll find Martin Luther hiding out at Wartburg Castle, home of his friend Frederick the Wise. If you find yourself in need of a hideout, being hidden by sovereign friends in their castles is perhaps the safest place of all – not only are you hidden, but your friends, particularly princes, have the power to influence religion in their principalities.

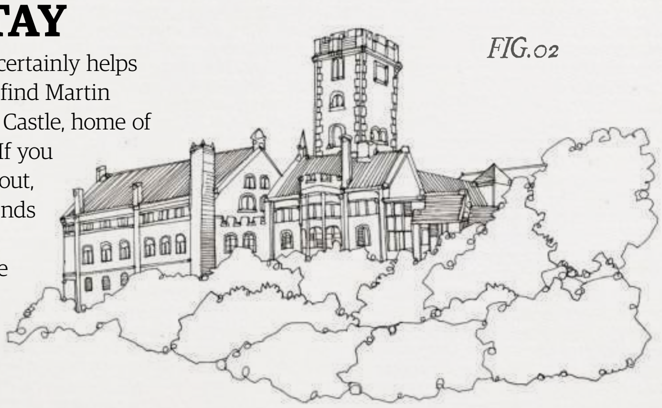


FIG.02

Dos & Don'ts

☑ **Attend public meetings.** In the 16th century, most people can't read or write. The latest news is spread by word of mouth, so don't miss out! Get yourself down to the town square.

☑ **Befriend the aristocracy.** If you find yourself in need of a handy hideaway, there's no better friend than a prince, who can shelter you in his cosy castle.

☑ **Get green fingers.** One of the few ways to make a living is through agriculture, so you'll need to practice your farming.

☑ **Take any opportunity for a bath.** The chance to get clean doesn't come that often in 16th-century Germany, so make sure you don't miss out.

☒ **Pay for indulgences.** It might seem somewhat obvious, but don't splash out on indulgences from a priest. You'll only be fuelling the fire that Luther is desperately trying to put out.

☒ **Perform 'witchcraft'.** Society is still incredibly Christian despite the effects of the Reformation, and anybody thought to be a witch could be put on trial and executed.

☒ **Dance.** If you find yourself tapping your foot to that funky beat, stop! You could have Dancing Fever, an epidemic that's hit the French-German border that will kill some of the 400 people afflicted with it.

☒ **Eat off pewter plates.** If you are offered food on a plate made of pewter, don't eat off it – unless you want to die from lead poisoning.

WHO TO BEFRIEND

Martin Luther

A modest Augustinian monk, Martin Luther was born to a humble family in 1483. His '95 Theses' of 1517 didn't only catch the attention of the local community of Wittenberg - word spread to the Vatican, and Luther has been branded a heretic and an outlaw by the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V. If you're going to make it through the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther is one man you want on your side. Intellectual, literate and reasonable, he's also using the printing press to spread his word across Germany, with his ideologies reaching even Henry VIII in Britain.

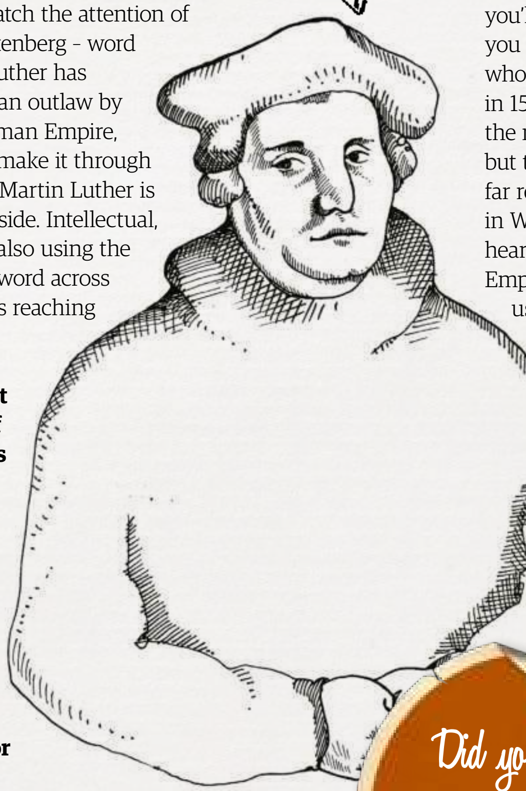


FIG.03

Extra tip: If you get caught up in the Peasants' War of 1524-25, don't use Luther's religious arguments to justify the revolt - you won't get the support you're expecting. Luther's argument isn't actually demanding social equality, and he'll condemn you, stating, "Nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful or devilish than a rebel."

WHO TO AVOID

Pope Leo X

If you're a Protestant reformer, you're already on Pope Leo X's watch list, so you'll want to stay out of his way before you go the same way as Martin Luther, who was brutally excommunicated in 1521. Germany might be in the midst of a reformation, but the pope's power is still far reaching. Don't forget: in Wittenberg, you're in the heart of the Holy Roman Empire, and Pope Leo X can use his power to influence the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, to exile you, like he did with Martin Luther.

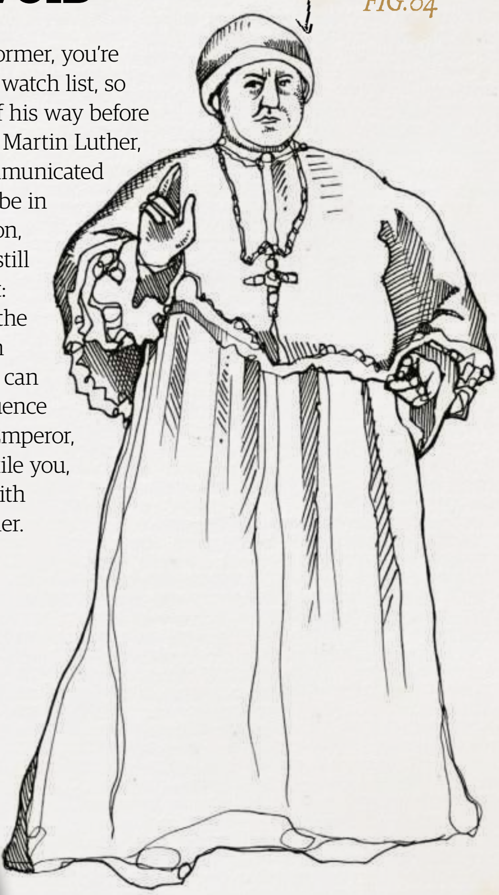


FIG.04

Did you know?

The term 'Protestant' first came into existence in April 1529

Helpful skills

Mastering these techniques could help you go far in the chaotic and turbulent time of revolution

Painting

Want to get in with the influential aristocracy? If you can't befriend them, use your artistic talents to become a court painter, where you can express passion for Lutheranism through the medium of art.

FIG.05

Latin

Martin Luther wrote his 95 Theses in Latin, so if you're going to understand it, get learning. You'll also need your Latin knowledge to translate the Bible into your own tongue.

FIG.06

Public speaking

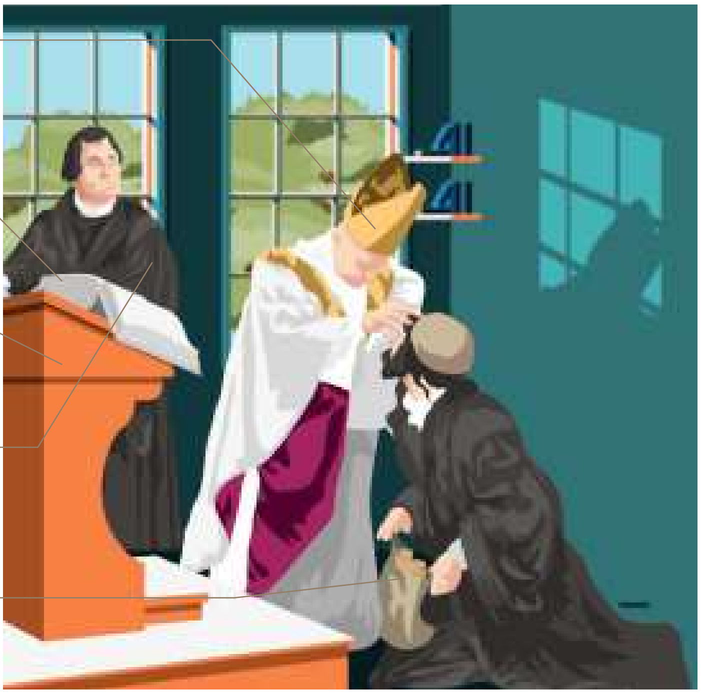
Now you've brushed up on your Latin, you'd better get in the town square and share those ideas. Very few people are literate during the 16th century, so the latest news and ideas are spread at meetings and gatherings.

FIG.07

How to create A REFORMATION PAMPHLET

THE PRINTING PRESS WAS THE SECRET OF PROTESTANTISM'S SUCCESS GERMANY, 1520S

For Martin Luther, printing was "the latest and greatest gift by which God intends the work of true religion to be known throughout the world". By 1524, more than 2 million copies of as many as 2,400 individual pamphlets were being produced in the Holy Roman Empire, and across Europe there had been a 1,000 per cent rise in pamphlet production since 1518. Typically between ten and 16 pages long, these cheap, provocative literary wares helped to transform Europe's religious landscape. "Every day," a disgruntled Catholic complained in 1521, "it rains Luther's books... nothing else sells." And Luther was only the most prolific of the many Protestant maestros of the pamphlet genre.



The clerical estate

The Reformation transformed the nature of the priesthood, with old ideas about a special clerical caste coming under assault.

The word of God

Translations of the Bible into vernacular languages had taken place before but came into their own during the Reformation.

Pulpit bashing

Preaching was the lifeblood of the first Protestants, with pulpits often replacing altars as the focal point in churches.

Firebrand

Martin Luther is well described as an accidental revolutionary, the theology professor whose private spiritual quest ended up transforming Christendom.

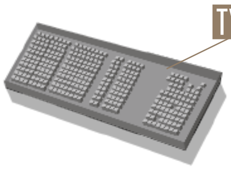
Indulgences

The early Reformers attacked indulgences, whereby remission from time in purgatory could be secured through good works or even financial payments.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

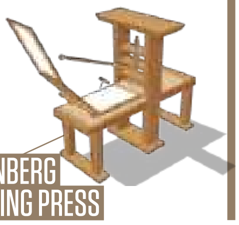
QUILL AND INK

BIBLE

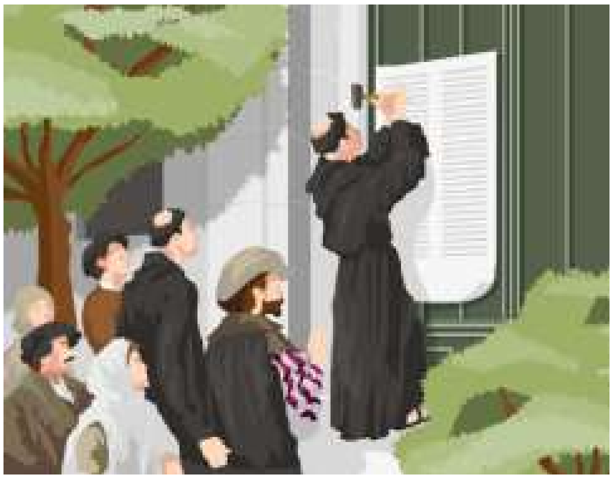


TYPE

MONEY

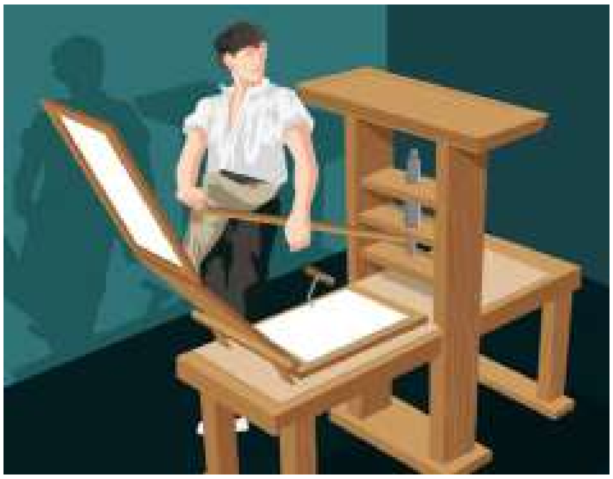


GUTENBERG PRINTING PRESS



01 MAKE A STATEMENT

The salvation of souls is at stake here, so be provocative. Your task is to identify the wounds of Christendom and tell us how to heal them. Challenge the status quo and, when your enemies bark, howl back even louder. And remember that ahead of pamphleteering, a little advance publicity can't hurt. Earning a reputation as a local agitator is an excellent strategy.

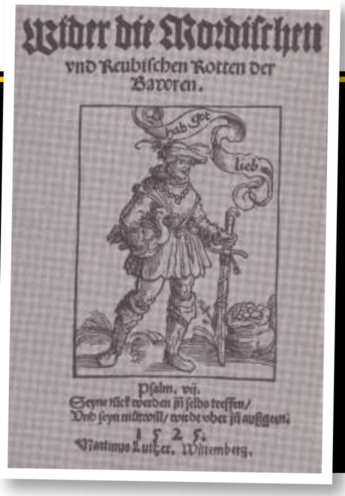


02 PRINT AND PRINT AGAIN

It's a competitive business, so don't be afraid of milking your bestsellers – Luther's pamphlets go through dozens of editions. Remember, an average press can turn out 1,500 sheets a day, and you have to keep up with countless rivals in places like Wittenberg and Strasbourg. Adding in woodcut illustrations is a sure way of gaining an audience.

How not to...
create a reformation pamphlet

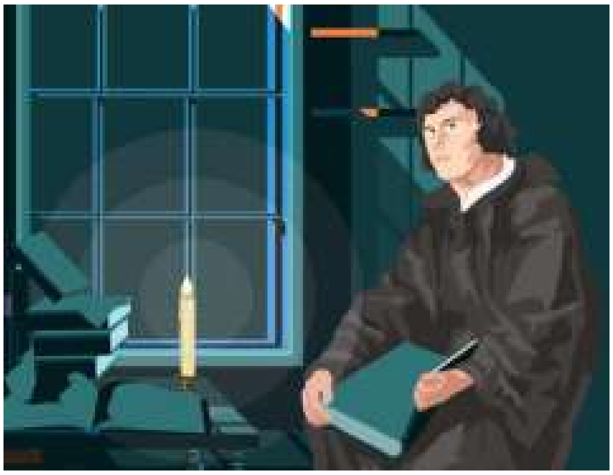
Early modern printing was an imperfect process. The paper used for pamphlets was of poor quality, copy-editing protocols were often sloppy, and printers usually rushed works through the presses to steal a march on their competitors. In 1525, Luther addressed a preface to "my dear printers, who so openly rob and steal from each other". He would have been willing to tolerate the fraud and theft within the industry if only they "did not corrupt and ruin my books so badly in the process". Texts were churned out so quickly "that when they come back to me I no longer recognise them". Something was always "missing in that place; that bit has been transposed; that part has not been corrected". Luther was also alert to widespread piracy and insisted on the use of complex type that was difficult to replicate. Rogue versions of his works still did good business though.



Wider die Mordiſchen
vnd Reubiſchen Rotten der
Bawren.

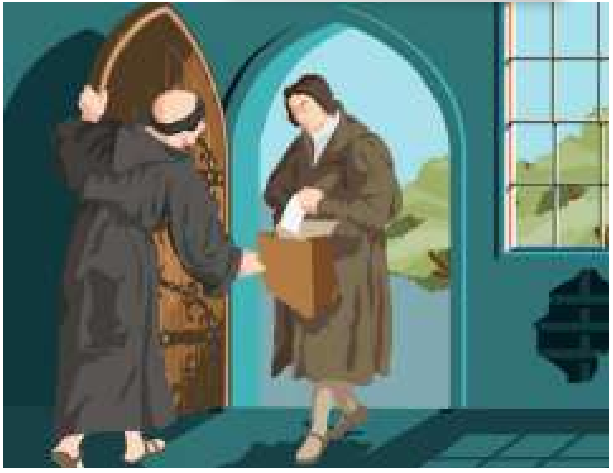
hab got
lieb

Pſalm. vij.
Seyne tück werden yn ſelbs treffen/
Vnd ſeyn mutwill/ wirdt vber yn außgeen.
1525.
Martinus Luther. Wittemberg.



03 REVISE YOUR MESSAGE

It's all about reacting to circumstances. When your enemies throw pamphlets back at you, as they surely will, reply in print immediately. Use their criticisms to show how wide they are off the mark. Don't be afraid of fine-tuning your ideas, and follow the news: if you can link your theological message to social or political concerns, then so much the better.

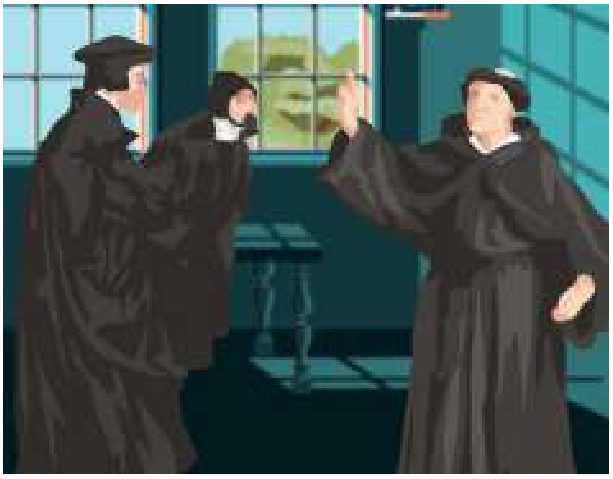


04 DISTRIBUTE

Build a network of trusted couriers and establish markets in towns with thriving academic and commercial communities. And keep prices low! If you're trying to spread your message to other places, be aware that Catholic authorities are constantly on the look out for pamphlet smugglers and will inflict terrible punishments on anyone they catch.

05 FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

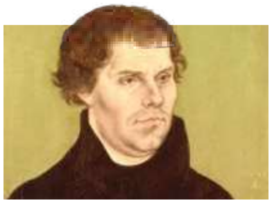
You want to appeal to as much of society as possible. Latin texts will go down well with the literati, but they are only going to get you so far. The people in the alehouses and the markets want pamphlets in a language they can understand. Using stories from everyday life will always go down well, and a little humour goes a long way.



06 DEFEND YOURSELF

If someone threatens to excommunicate you, take it in your stride. Burn the papers publicly if need be. If you're hauled before some tribunal, they'll want you to trip yourself up so just remain calm and hammer out the basics of your beliefs. Above all, watch out for dissension in your own ranks: don't let the radicals hijack your message.

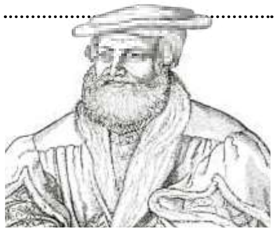
4 *Famous...* REFORMATION PAMPHLETEERS



MARTIN LUTHER

WITTENBERG, 1483–1546

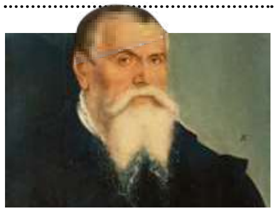
The originator of the Reformation and its most energetic pamphleteer. In 1523 alone he produced more than 50 significant works.



HANS SACHS

NUREMBERG, 1494–1576

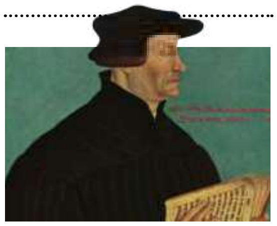
Not all pamphleteers were learned theologians. Sachs, a cobbler by trade, produced dozens of important pamphlets and was one of Luther's greatest supporters.



LUCAS CRANACH

WITTENBERG, 1472–1553

The images in pamphlets were crucial, and Cranach, an intimate friend of Luther, took time out from loftier artistic pursuits to become a master of the pamphlet woodcut.



ULRICH ZWINGLI

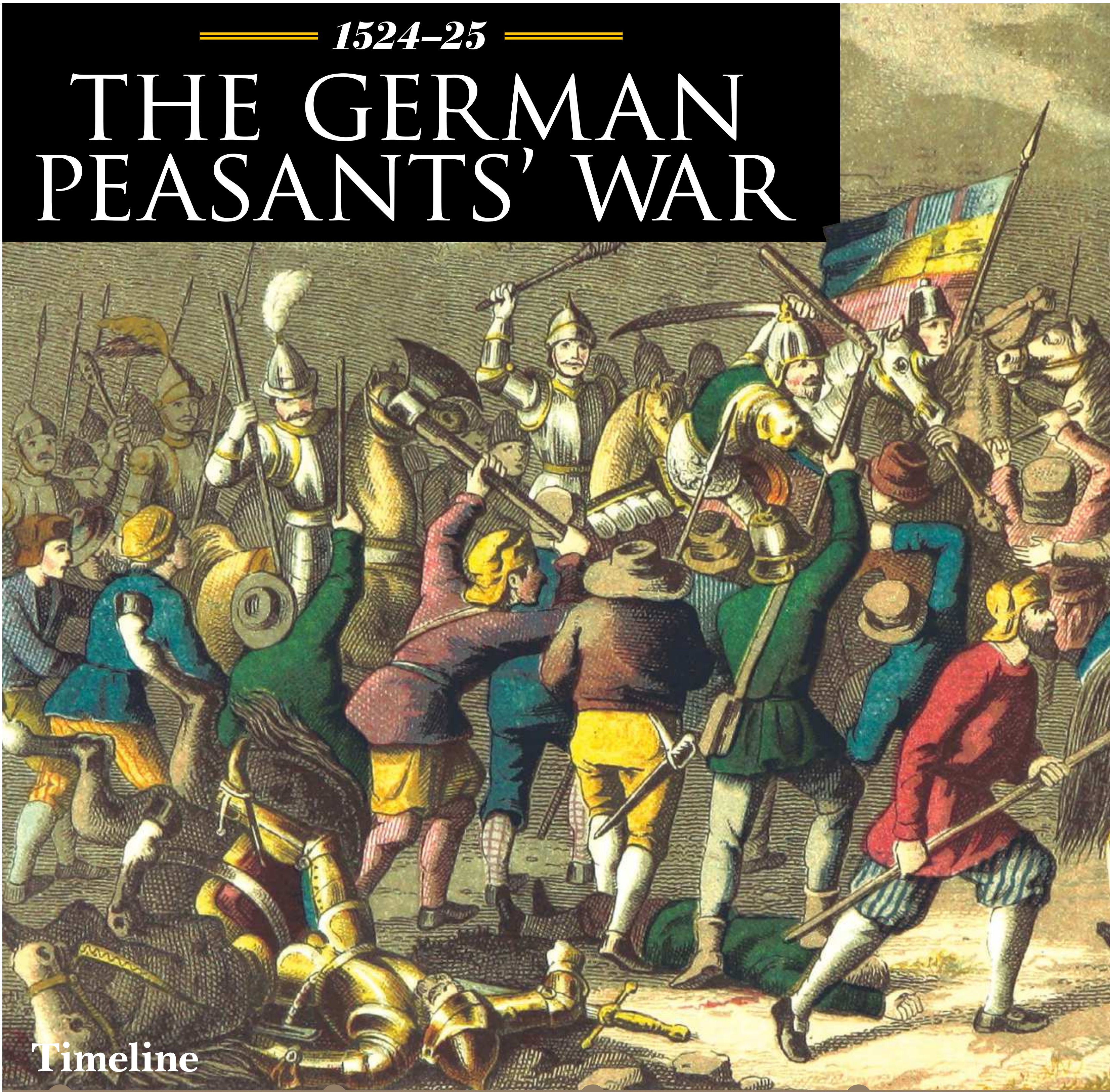
ZURICH, 1484–1531

Zwingli led the religious transformation of Zurich. As reflected in his pamphlets, his theological vision departed in radical ways from Luther's.

© Ed Crooks

1524–25

THE GERMAN PEASANTS' WAR



Timeline

JUNE 1524

The Countess of Lupfen demands a harvest of snail shells from the count's tenants on a holiday. Instead, the peasants raise a banner and create a list of grievances.

6-20 MARCH 1525

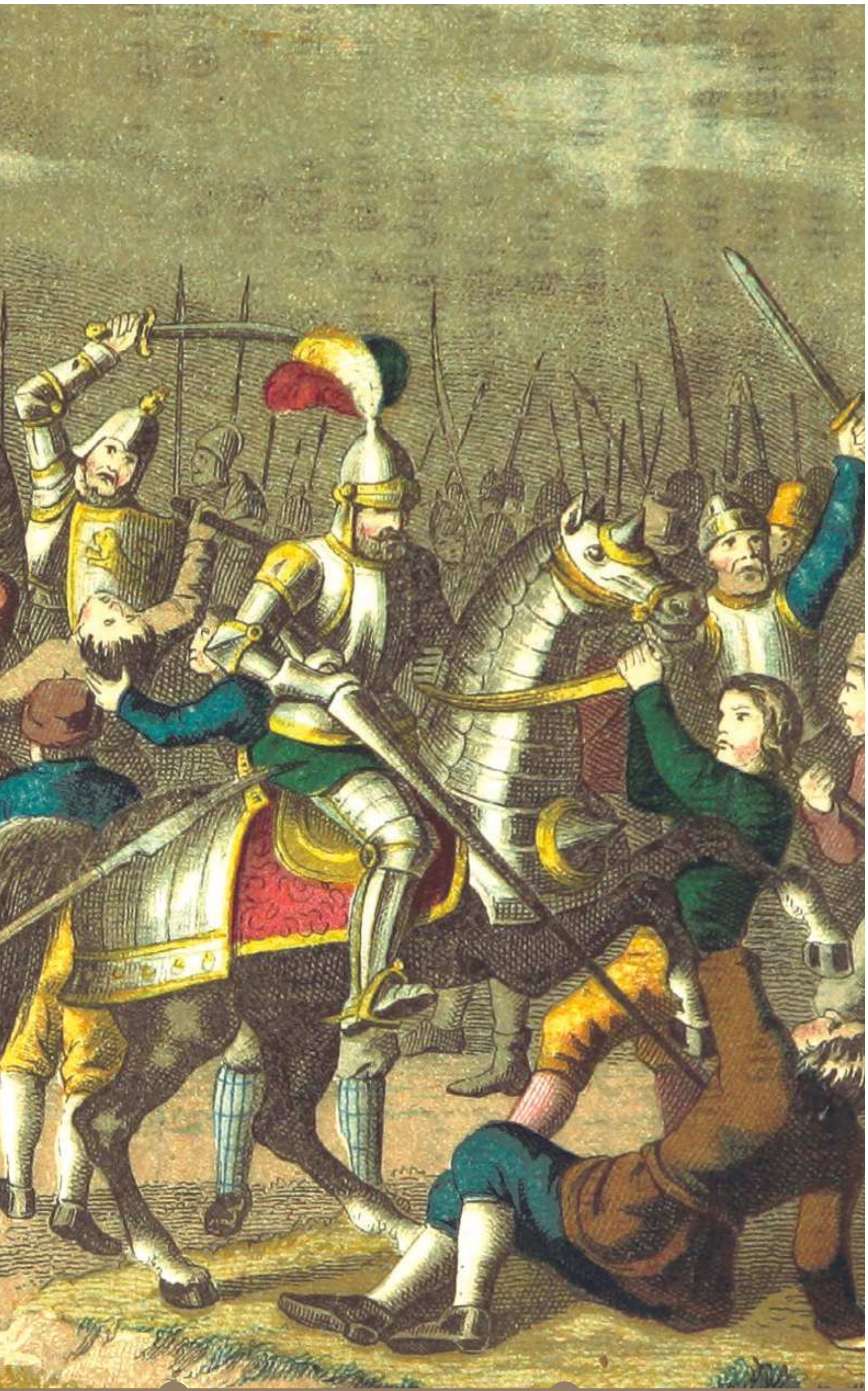
Representatives from the separate groups of peasants meet and discuss a set of common demands. They agree on what is known as the Twelve Articles.

4 APRIL 1525

The peasants attempt to attack the city of Ulm in the Battle of Leipheim. Catching sight of the Swabian League, they attempt to retreat but 1,000 are killed.

13 MAY 1525

The peasants attack Weinsberg Castle, achieving victory and taking the count prisoner. They execute him along with 70 other nobles, but this causes a divide among the peasants.



29 APRIL 1525

The Battle of Frankenhausen sees the peasants defeated in battle against the armies of Phillip I of Hesse and George, Duke of Saxony. Mützner is captured and killed shortly after.

SEPTEMBER 1525

The remains of the rebellion are put down and many peasants return to their farms. The peasant movement has ultimately failed.

WHAT WAS IT?

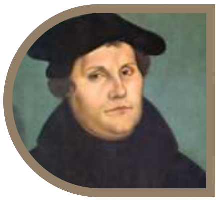
Following a period of unrest and economic trouble, peasants in the German-speaking areas of the Holy Roman Empire rose up against the Catholic Church and landowners. The rebellion began in June 1524 at Stühlingen when approximately 1,000 men created a list of grievances, but by October more peasants had risen up in large numbers around most of southwest Germany.

Representatives of the rebels came together in Memmingen to find a common goal and created the Twelve Articles. This list of demands included free access to fish and game, release from serfdom and the right for a community to choose and depose its own pastor. Published and printed, the Twelve Articles spread rapidly throughout Germany, sparking a series of battles and massacres. Most ended in the peasants' defeat. When the war ended, more than 100,000 had been killed, and the installation of harsh restrictions and terms discouraged further rebellion.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

Conditions for peasants had been poor in the years preceding the revolt, with complaints of increasing workloads and high rent as nobles demanded more and more from the tenants and serfs to offset decreased land value. While the Reformation played a large part in the revolt, it did not appear in the first list of demands created by the peasants to rise at Stühlingen. It wasn't until the movement expanded that more religious grievances began to emerge, and the rebels began to use the Lutheran ideas already preached in the towns and villages to find a common non-agrarian cause for war. Lines in the Twelve Articles such as "The Bible proves that we are free, and we want to be free" show inspiration from Luther's work.

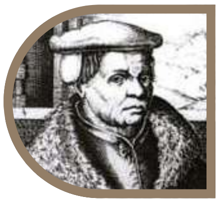
WHO WAS INVOLVED?



Martin Luther

10 November 1483 – 18 February 1546

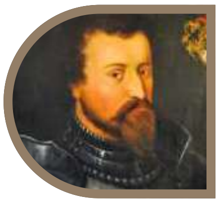
Translating the Bible into common German, Luther helped inspire the revolt. However, this was unintentional and he actually condemned the actions of the peasants.



Thomas Müntzer

1490 – 27 May 1525

Inspired by Luther's ideas, Müntzer became a leading radical reformer and supporter of the revolt, even personally leading troops in battle.



Georg Truchsess von Waldburg

25 January 1488 – 29 May 1531

Known as "scourge of the peasants", the commander of the Swabian League had a reputation for being harsh and pitiless towards his enemies.

THE HABSBURGS

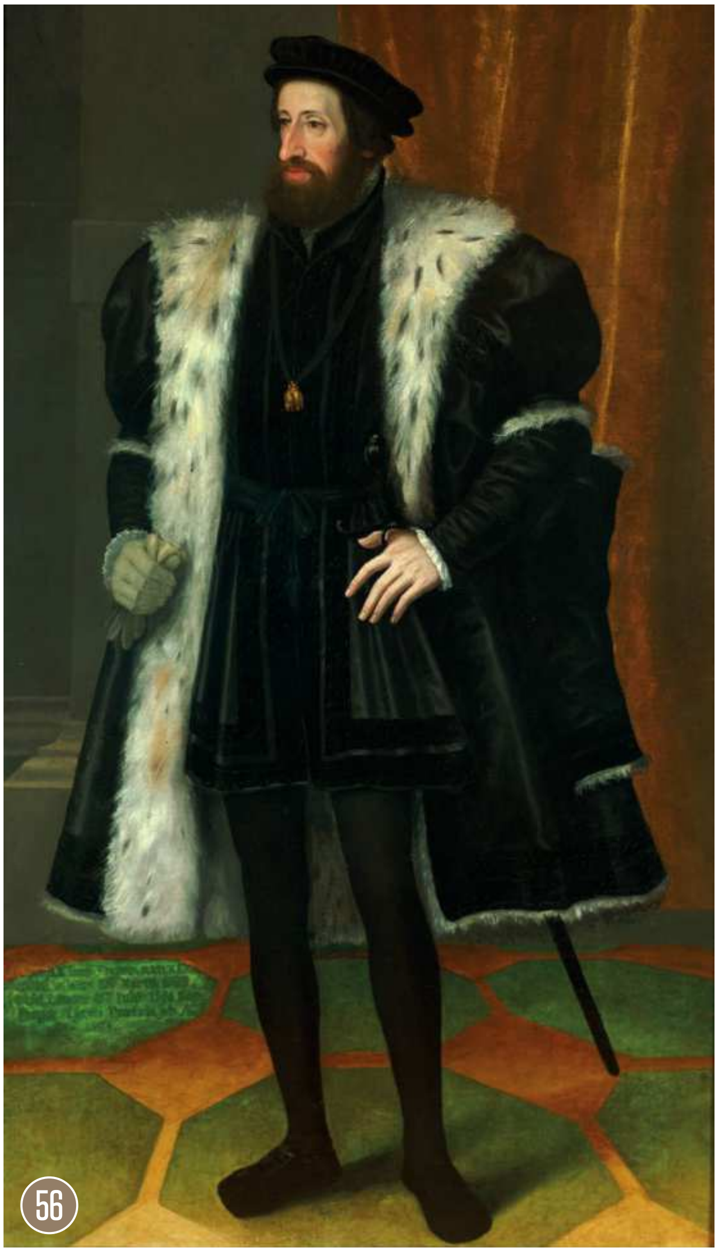
56 **An introduction**
Meet the family that founded a dynasty that would govern the Holy Roman Empire for over 300 years

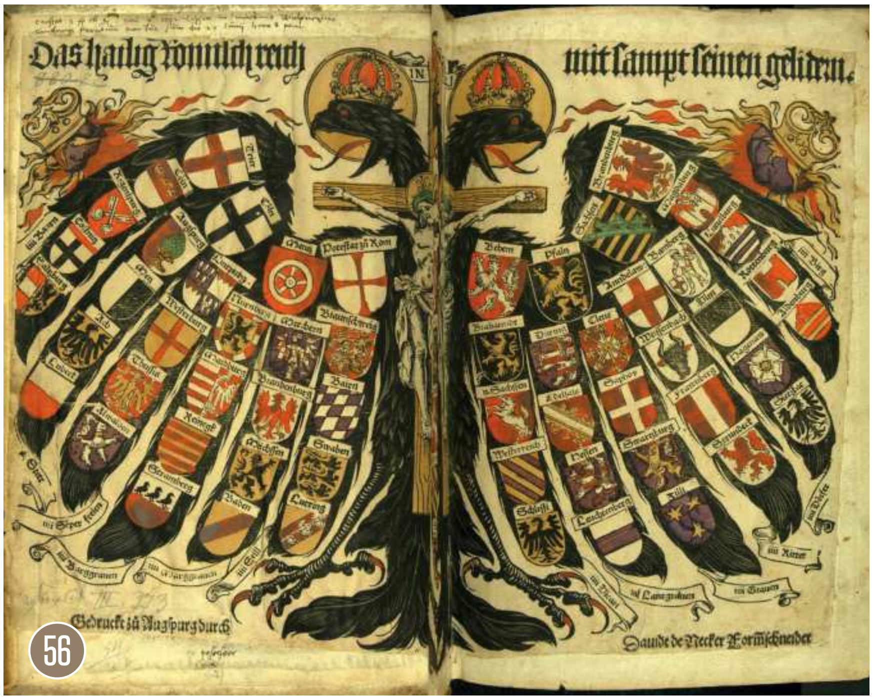
58 **Charles V**
Could one man really hope to rule a united Europe while expanding his empire in the New World?

66 **The Hofburg**
Explore the magnificent imperial palace from which the Habsburgs ruled their many lands and subjects

74 **Margaret of Austria**
Examine the life of a pioneering woman who used her talents to rule the Netherlands, negotiate international treaties and crown an emperor

82 **Rudolf II – the alchemist of Austria**
Radical thinker or completely insane? Just who was Rudolf II?




Das hailig Römiſch reich
mit ſampt ſeinen glidern.
Gedruckt zu Augſpurg durch
Dauid de Necker Formſchneider
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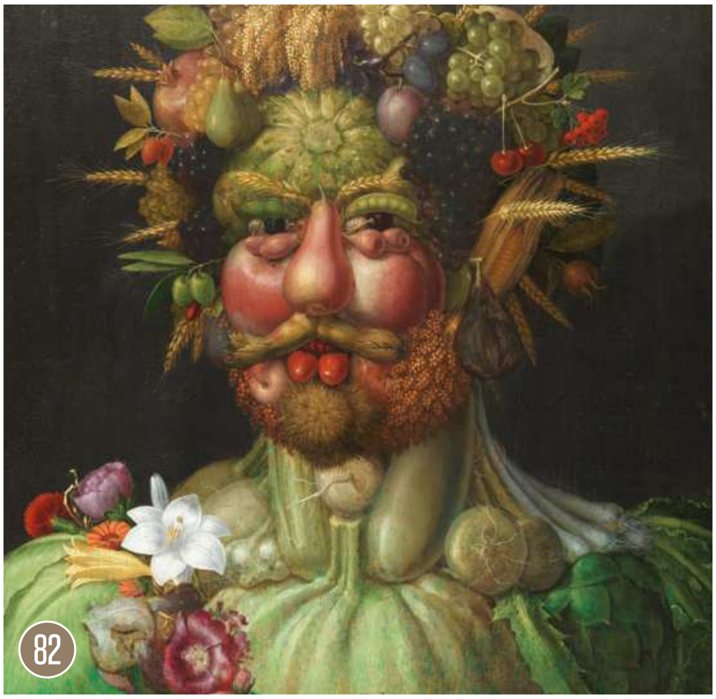

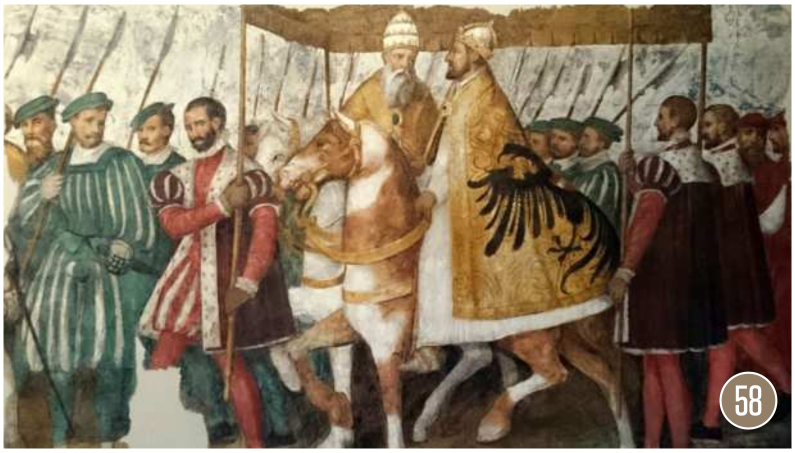
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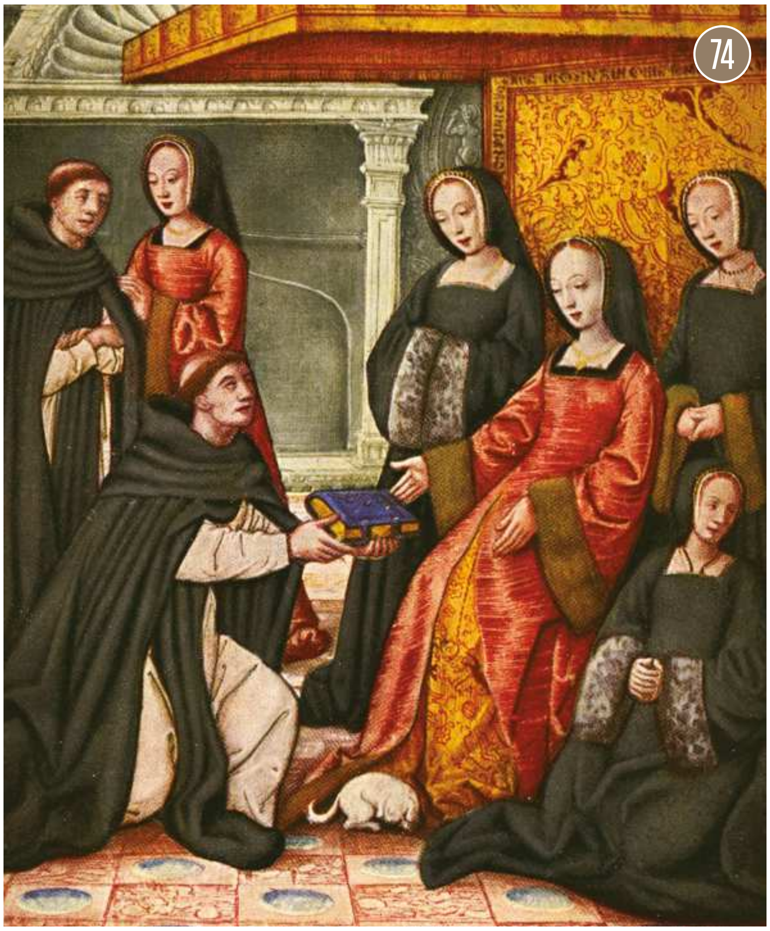
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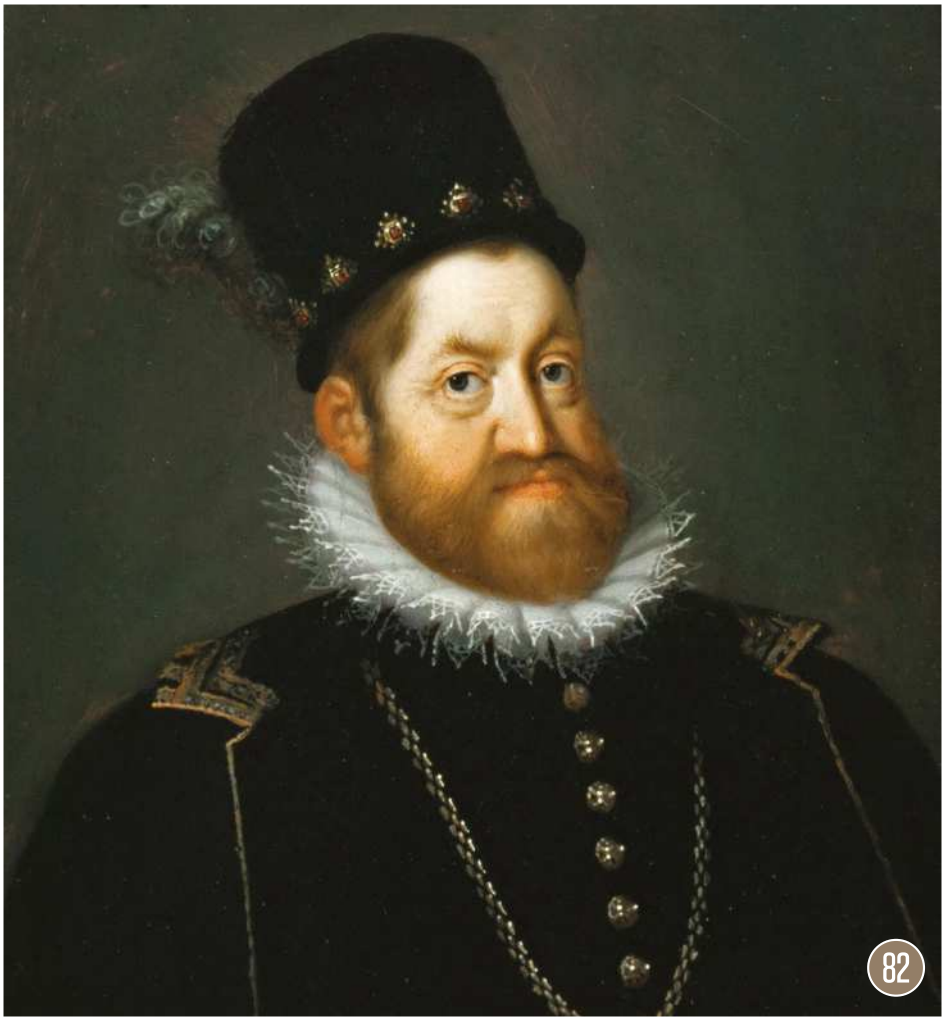
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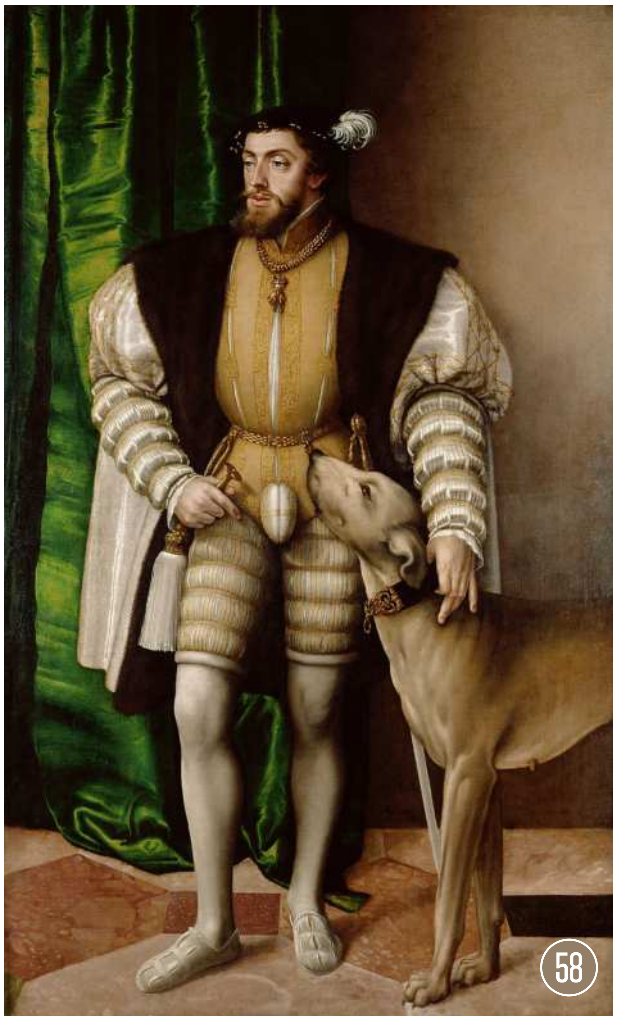
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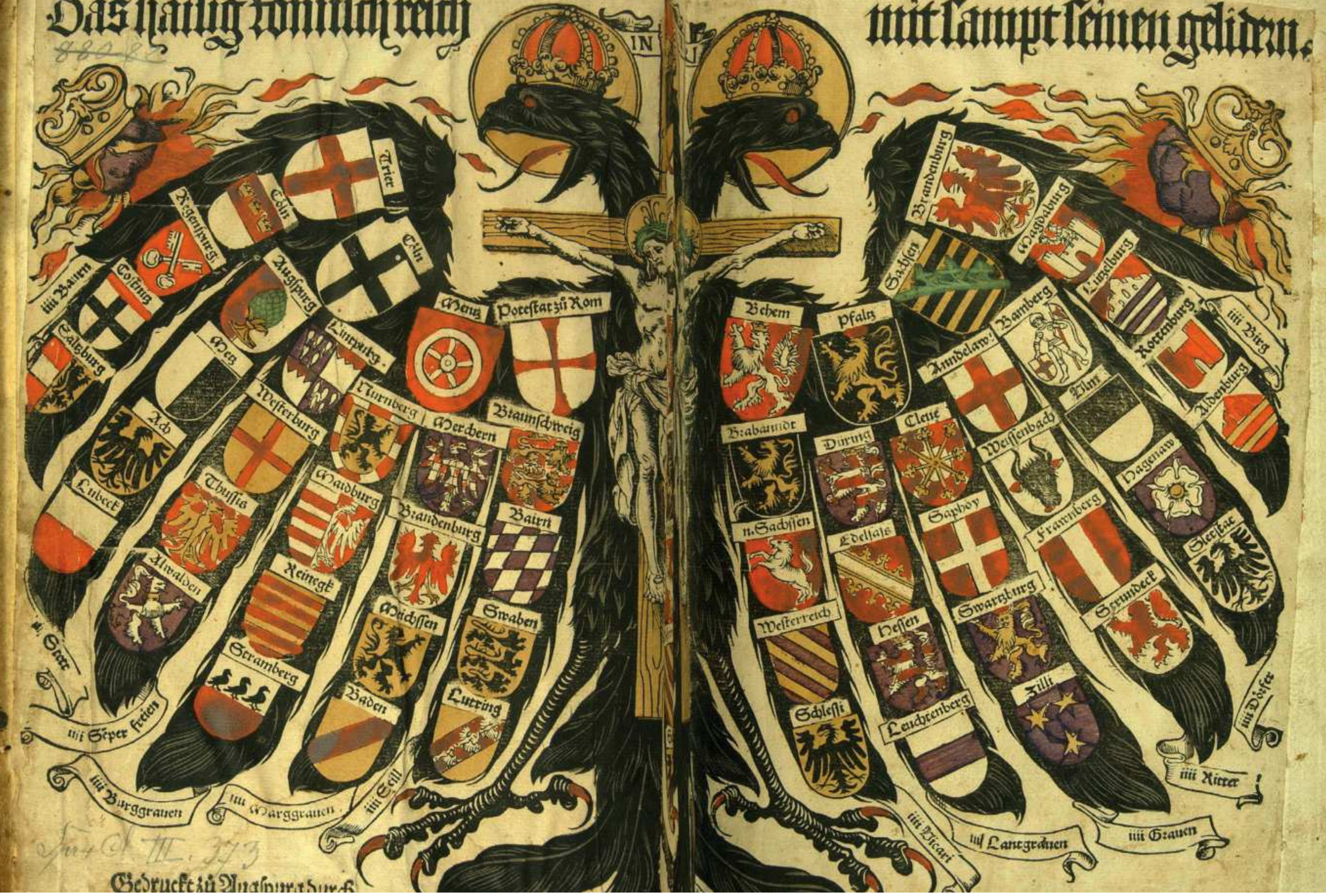
Das hailig romiſch reich
mit ſampt ſeinen glidern.
Trier
Cöln
Cöln
Regenſpurg
Coſtentz
Augſpurg
Metz
Menz
Poteſtat zů Rom
Behem
Pfaltz
Brandenburg
Magdaburg
Sachſen
Bamberg
Rotenburg
Ulm
Lübeck
Ach
Weſterburg
Nürnberg
Braunſchweig
Brabannt
Cleue
Saphoy
Frauenberg
Swartzburg
Baden
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Zilli
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iiii Marggrauen
iiii Landtgrauen
iiii Grauen
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iiii Dörfer
Gedruckt zů Augſpurg durch

An introduction to

THE HABSBURG DYNASTY

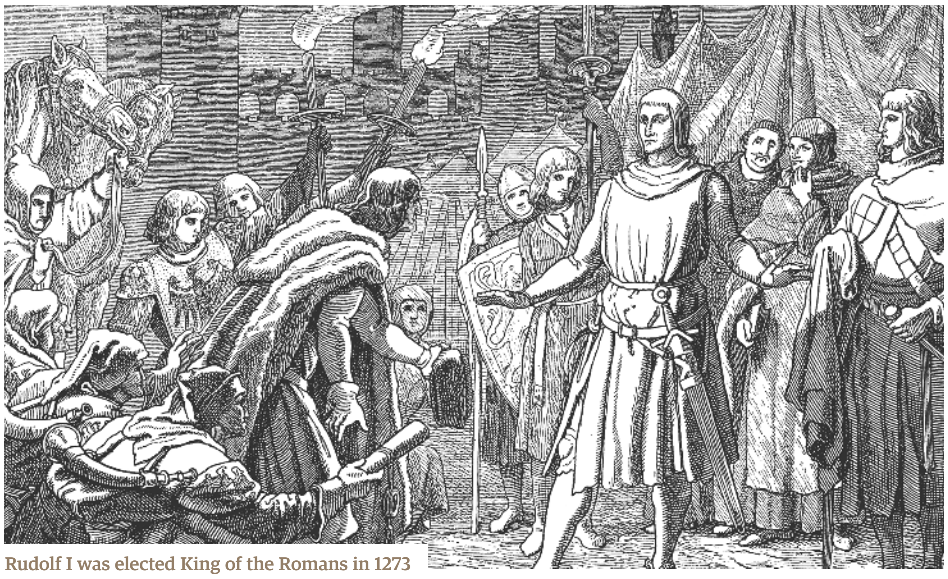
The royal house that dominated a continent for five centuries

Written by Jessica Leggett

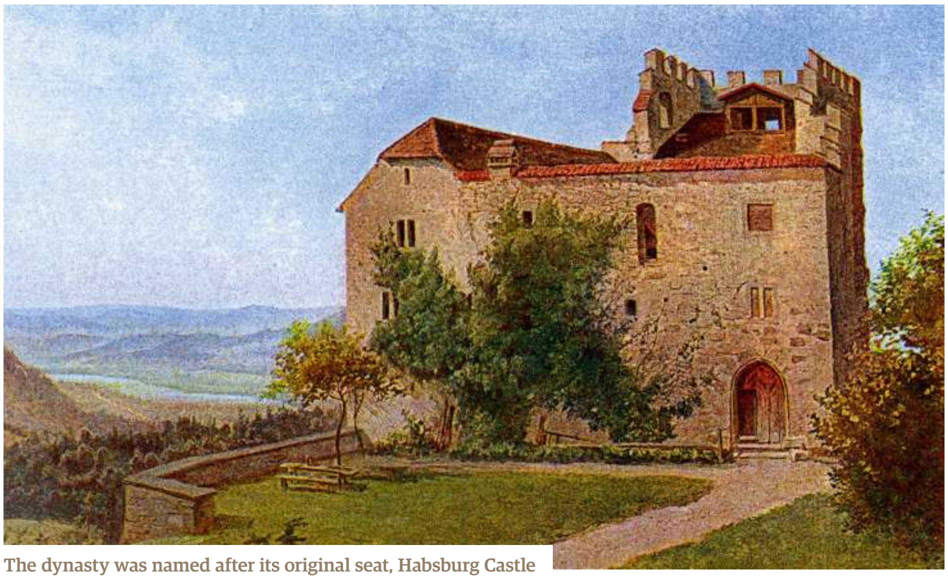
The House of Habsburg was undeniably one of the most powerful sovereign dynasties in Europe between the 15th and 20th centuries. It was founded in the 11th century by Radbot, Count of Klettgau, and the dynasty would later be renamed after the fortress he built, Habsburg Castle. The dynasty's domains grew after Rudolf I, Count of Habsburg and later King of the Romans, acquired the Duchy of Austria in 1278. The first member of the House of Habsburg to become Holy Roman Emperor was Frederick III, who was elected to the position in 1440, although his coronation was not held until 1452. For almost three centuries the title of Holy Roman Emperor was held by the Habsburgs. It essentially became hereditary, as each emperor exerted his influence to ensure that his kin would be elected.

Frederick III's son, Maximilian I, became ruler of the Holy Roman Empire upon his father's death in 1493. The territory of the Habsburgs continued to expand during Maximilian's lifetime thanks to a series of clever marriage alliances with the royal families in Europe, beginning with his marriage to Mary of Burgundy in 1482, in which he gained the Netherlands.

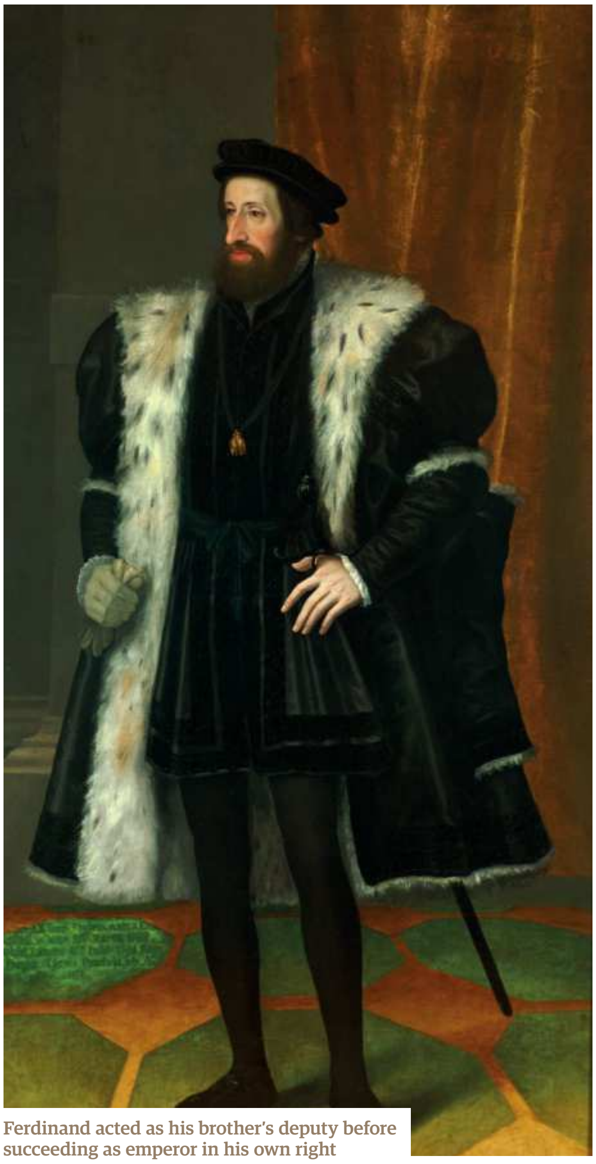
After the early death of his son, Philip the Handsome, in 1506, Maximilian campaigned for his grandson, Charles, to succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor after his death. Elected as Charles V in 1519, the new emperor had already inherited Spain and its colonies in 1516 after the death of his mother, Joanna of Castile, the daughter



Rudolf I was elected King of the Romans in 1273



The dynasty was named after its original seat, Habsburg Castle



Ferdinand acted as his brother's deputy before succeeding as emperor in his own right

of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. Through Charles, the territories of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and the hereditary lands of the House of Habsburg were joined together for the first time in a personal union.

The size of Charles' new empire was so unprecedented that it became known as 'the empire on which the sun never sets', changing the balance of power in Europe. However, governing the vast Habsburg domains was difficult, and Charles often needed regents or deputies to help him rule his empire, namely his brother, Ferdinand, who was governor of the Austrian lands.

In 1521 Charles awarded Ferdinand the title of Archduke of Austria and promised to support his election as King of the Romans during an imperial assembly known as the Diet of Worms. This title was now seen as a precursor to the role of Holy Roman Emperor, and so when Ferdinand was duly elected as king in 1531, it was a sign that he would eventually succeed to the imperial throne.

After ruling his extensive empire for 40 years took its toll on his health, Charles abdicated in 1556 and split his territories between his son, Philip II, and his brother, who was subsequently elected as Holy Roman Emperor. From this point onwards the Habsburg dynasty was divided in two, with the Spanish branch led by Philip and the Austrian branch ruled by Ferdinand.

Successive Austrian Habsburgs continued to hold the position of Holy Roman Emperor until 1740, when the male line became extinct upon the death of Charles VI. His daughter, Maria Theresa, succeeded him as the ruler of the Habsburg territories, but she only became Holy Roman Empress after her husband, Francis I, was elected to the imperial throne in 1745 – although she wielded the power behind the scenes.

Although the female line of the Habsburgs ended following Maria Theresa's death, she founded the house of Habsburg-Lorraine through her marriage to Francis. This new house continued to rule the Holy Roman Empire until 1806, when it was dissolved by Francis II after the empire was defeated by Napoleon and the First French Empire.

> *"The first member of the Habsburgs to become Holy Roman Emperor was Frederick III"*

1500–1558

CHARLES V

How one man's pursuit of an empire upon which the sun would never set irretrievably fractured Western Europe

Written by Frances White

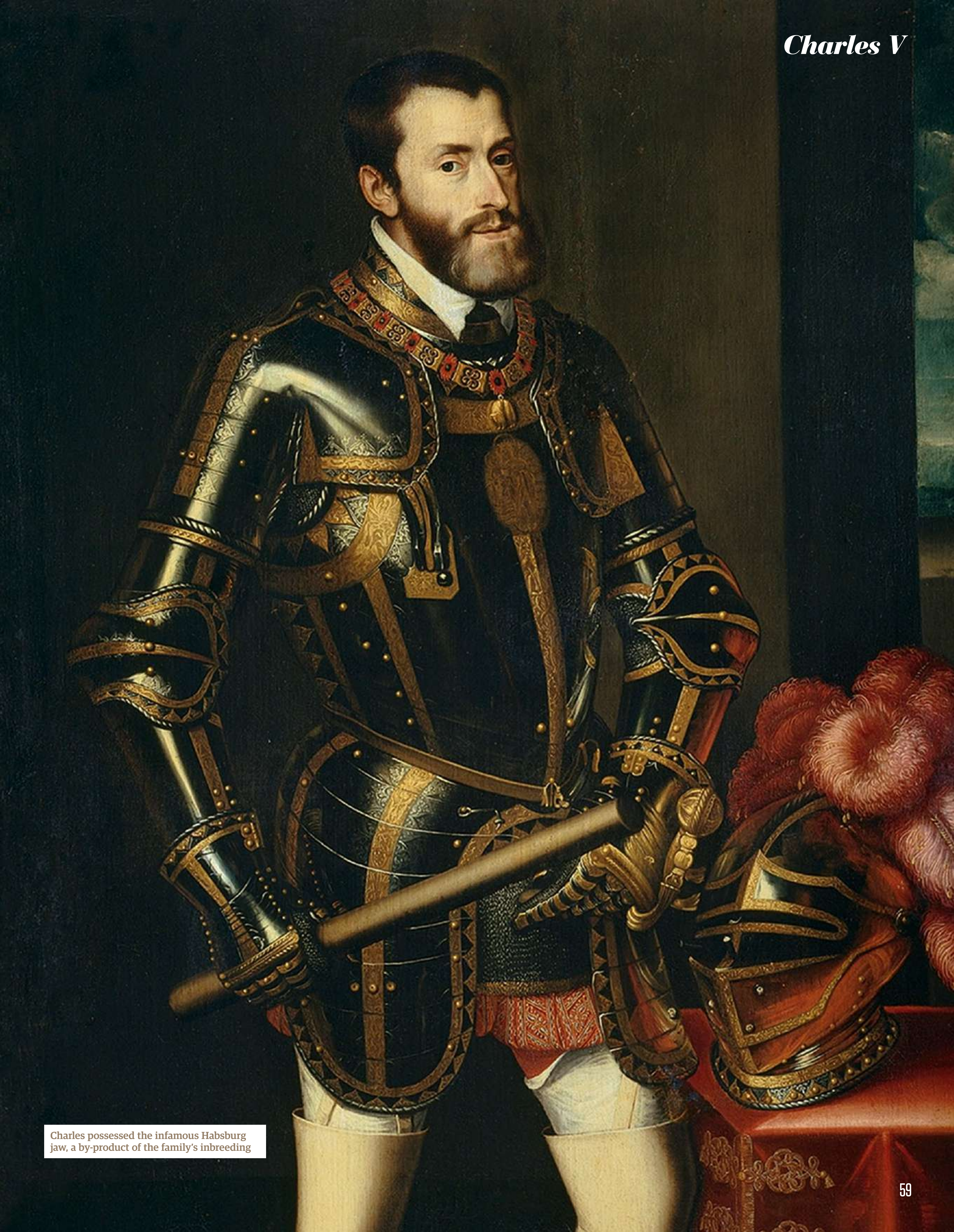
In the history of world rulers, with all facts on paper, Charles V should rub shoulders with the greatest. Charles was not only head of the influential House of Habsburg, but his dominions over Europe extended from Germany to Spain to northern Italy, and even Austria and the Low Countries – modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. All these dominions combined with the Spanish colonisation of what would become known as the Americas prompted his realms to be labelled the very first 'empire on which the sun never sets'. Despite the staggering reach of his power, the pedigree of his name and the huge number of crowns balancing atop his head, Charles V never quite achieved the legendary status this empire should have ensured.

Charles' reign was one not only of impressive power but also failure. It is an epic tale of one man's determination against impossible odds. But no matter how inspiring the story, it ultimately ended in defeat. But why was this? Was Charles doomed from the start? Was ruling such a vast kingdom an impossible task, or does the blame lie with Charles himself and the lethal thread of ambition that sent him down a disastrous path he could have avoided?

From the beginning of his life Charles was imbued with great purpose due to the two ambitious and influential dynasties that joined to birth him. His mother, Joanna of Aragon and Castile, saw him inherit not only Spain but also parts of Italy, while his father, Philip I, gave him dominion over the Habsburg Netherlands, which formed what were known as the Low Countries. His royal blood extended to his grandparents, and his paternal grandfather was the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. To put it simply, Charles V was destined to be a ruler. Blue blood ran in his veins, and he was determined to claim all the rights of his heritage.

However, rule was far more difficult than Charles had prepared for. He had doubters, not only from outside but within his own family. His maternal grandfather wished to see his younger brother Ferdinand take the Spanish crown, fearing a Spanish-Habsburg union under Charles. When Charles' father died, Charles had a mountain of responsibility thrust upon him from an early age. However, the young prince rose to the challenge, and when it was suggested that Ferdinand should take over Spanish rule, Charles reacted with confidence and authority, rejecting the notion and keeping the crown in his growing collection.

When Charles arrived in Spain in 1517, it was as a foreigner. He barely spoke the language, and had no idea of the customs. To the people he was not their



Charles possessed the infamous Habsburg jaw, a by-product of the family's inbreeding

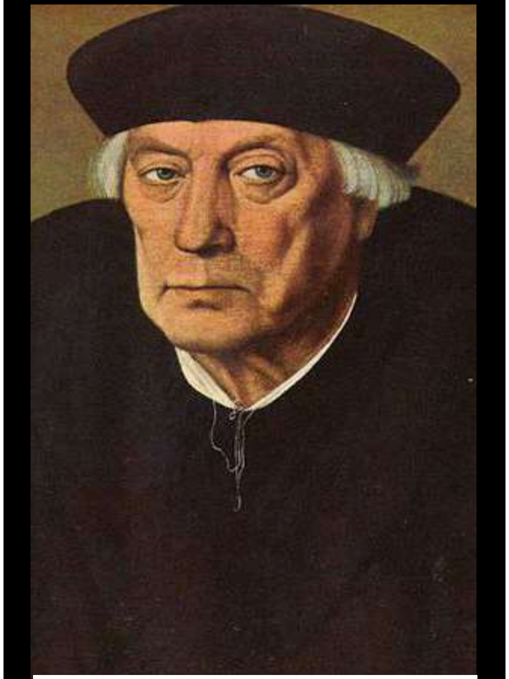
A universal monarch

Could Europe ever be governed by one man?

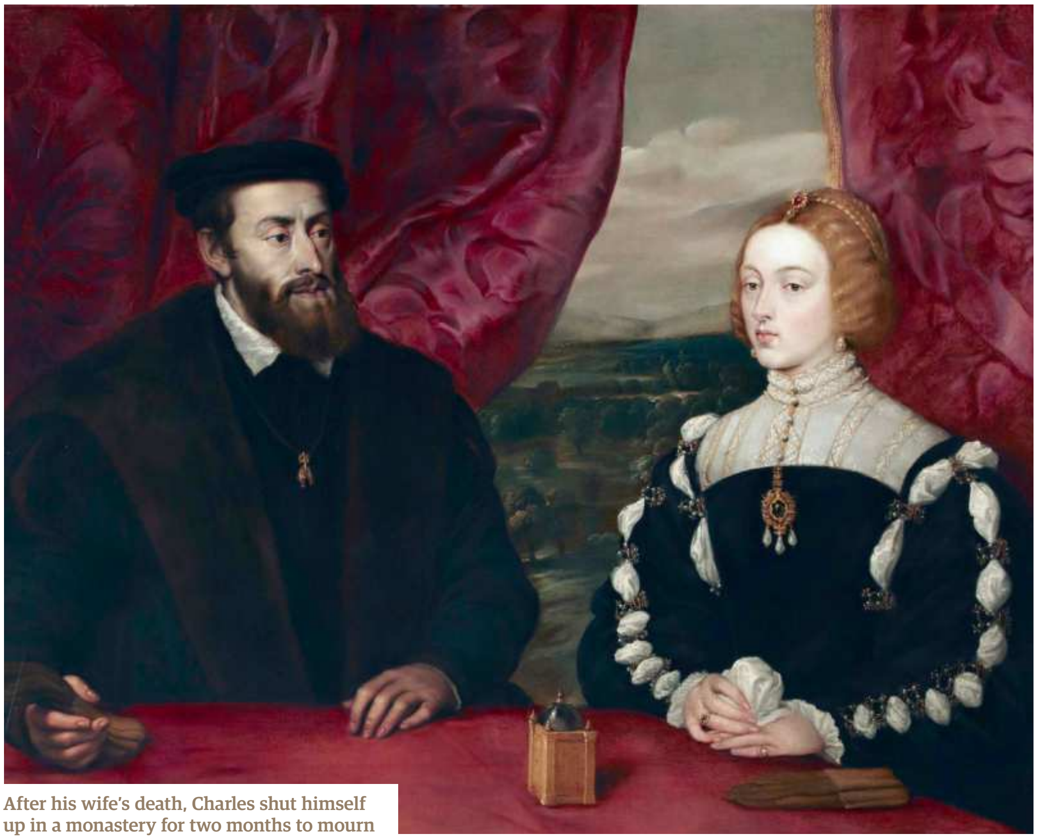
When Charles became king, he also became the first person to ever rule Castile and Aragon at the same time. To many, this made Charles the very first king of Spain. When he was elected Holy Roman Emperor after the death of Maximilian, his grandfather, his power grew enormously. It was the closest Europe had come to a universal monarchy since Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, all the way back in the 9th century.

Charles greatly desired to rule many of the territories he had inherited with a monarchy that would extend from Spain to Germany to the New World. The idea that Charles could become the new Charlemagne was greatly promoted by his Chancellor, Mercurino di Gattinara, and Charles was hungry to make this dream of universal monarchy a reality. However, his great heritage and grand ambitions hadn't gone unnoticed. Along with an abundance of territories, Charles had also inherited a wealth of enemies, all who feared that Charles would create a European hegemony. At the time the idea of the nation state was becoming popular, and Charles stood in direct opposition to this.

Francis I of France, Suleiman I of the Ottoman Empire and the Protestant princes of Germany all opposed Charles' quest for universal power and proved very difficult obstacles. Charles dedicated almost his entire life to winning this struggle for control, as well as fighting the rise of Protestantism. In the end, facing the prospect of an alliance between all of his many enemies, Charles was forced to abandon his dream of a universal monarchy and divided all his claims with a series of abdications, ensuring no one person would inherit the vast empire he had ruled.



Gattinara urged Charles to create a dynastic empire in order to achieve a united Christendom



After his wife's death, Charles shut himself up in a monastery for two months to mourn

king but a foreign ruler, and when his grandfather's death prompted him to leave, his people were immensely unsatisfied and unconvinced with their new king. But Charles had greater aims in sight. He wished to play a major role on the European stage, and the best way to do that was to ensure that his grandfather's role as Holy Roman Emperor fell to him. Charles had his eyes on another crown to add to his collection.

To Charles the role of emperor was not simply one of power; it also offered him the chance to serve as 'God's standard bearer', to protect Christian Europe against heresy from outside and within. During the campaign for emperor he fought off challenges from Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France with a combination of bribes, propaganda and threats. It worked. Charles won his prize and was elected King of the Romans on 28 June 1519. Yet, while it may have felt like victory, it was to be a crown of thorns.

Although the title of emperor came with the obvious prestige and power, the Holy Roman Empire was already in decline when Charles came to rule it. Conflicts about the reach of the emperor's power were ongoing, and the princes ruling over their individual territories wished for as much independence and authority as possible.

In reality Charles had no way of forming a permanent army from his territories, and there was no system of imperial taxation. Although the emperor could make decisions on discussions at the diets, formal meetings of rulers within the empire, in practice there was no real way of enforcing these decisions.

Charles had an impressive stash of crowns, but it was this collection that made his rule so difficult. He was an Austrian prince so had inherited the nation's struggle against the Turks in Hungary, while the Holy Roman Empire presented its own struggles against the ambitious semi-independent German princes within it. In northern Italy he faced challenges from France, and he also had to protect the interests of Aragon in the Mediterranean, not to mention the Castilian possessions in South America, which also had to be attended to. There was also the Netherlands, who wished to make peace with France and England in order to enrich trade. Charles faced the objectively impossible task of juggling all these interests and keeping everyone happy at the same time while also fighting off his enemies. And there was a new enemy on the horizon.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther appeared to answer questions regarding his theses, which had encouraged the Protestant Revolution across Europe. Despite being berated for his 'heresy', Luther refused to back down to the challenges to his writings. Rather than stamping out this growing threat to his Catholic empire, Charles' diet had actually helped Luther's message grow. Luther's powerful testimony of faith at the diet converted the first German prince to Lutheranism.

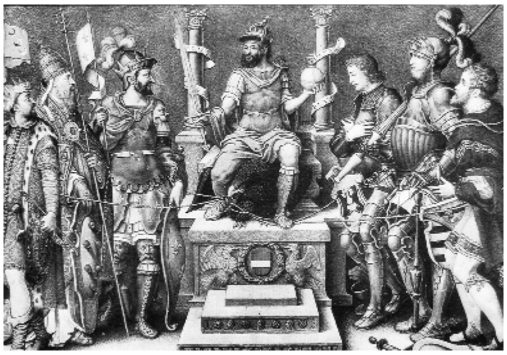
Outraged, Charles rejected Luther's work and all but declared war on Protestantism. The Protestant Reformation was not only a challenge to Charles' staunch Catholic faith; it also seriously threatened his ultimate end goal – a unified rule over all of Western Europe.

It wasn't just Protestantism that threatened this dream. Charles' major rival, which he had inherited along with all his crowns, was France. The country was determined to claim land in either Naples or Milan, and Charles concentrated a lot of his time and effort on fighting off this threat. The first of these conflicts began in 1521 when Charles allied with Pope Leo X against the French and Venetians. Charles' force was one to be reckoned with, and in the Battle of Pavia he achieved a tremendous victory, even managing to take the French king prisoner. The terms of peace were hugely favourable to Charles, but by 1526 Francis I was back in the field again, ignoring the terms of the treaty, and this time he brought friends.

France joined the League of Cognac, Pope Clement VII's alliance with Venice, Florence and Milan against the emperor. Determined to squash a united uprising against him, Charles' – ironically – mainly Protestant troops entered an unprotected Rome and mercilessly sacked it.

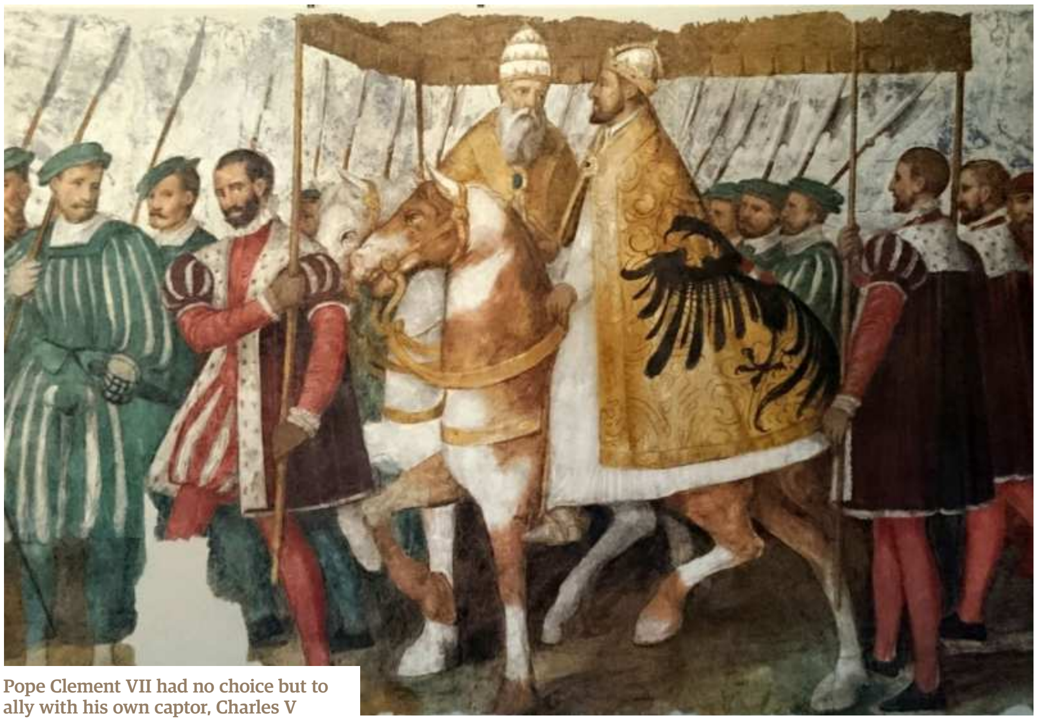
After later capturing Milan, victory was Charles' once again in the Treaty of Cambrai in 1529, which ensured he would hold dominion over Italy by granting him Milan and Naples. The pope then went on to become the last to crown a Holy Roman Emperor when he finally crowned Charles in February 1530.

Victory against France was, on the face of it, an encouraging boost to Charles' military reputation. However, while distracted with France, his position in Germany had deteriorated massively. His absence had given the anti-Habsburg princes a chance to consolidate their power. Charles also faced the menace of the Turks advancing into Hungary. The accession of Suleiman the Magnificent to Ottoman Sultan in 1520 had massively increased Turkish pressure on Europe.



This painting shows Charles enthroned over his enemies, including Suleiman, Pope Clement VII and Francis I

> "Charles' major rival, which he had inherited along with all his crowns, was France"



Pope Clement VII had no choice but to ally with his own captor, Charles V

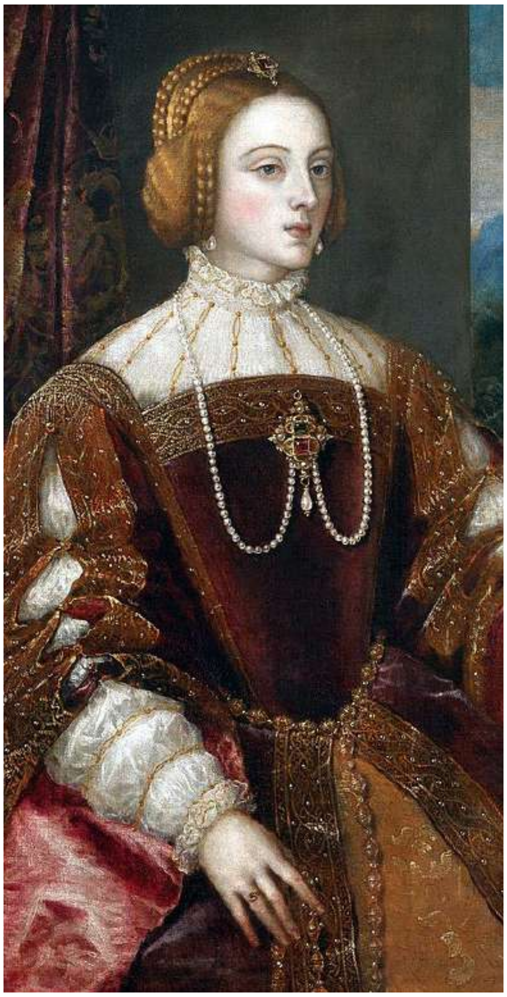
Empress of the Carnation

Charles V's regent queen was far more than just a pretty face

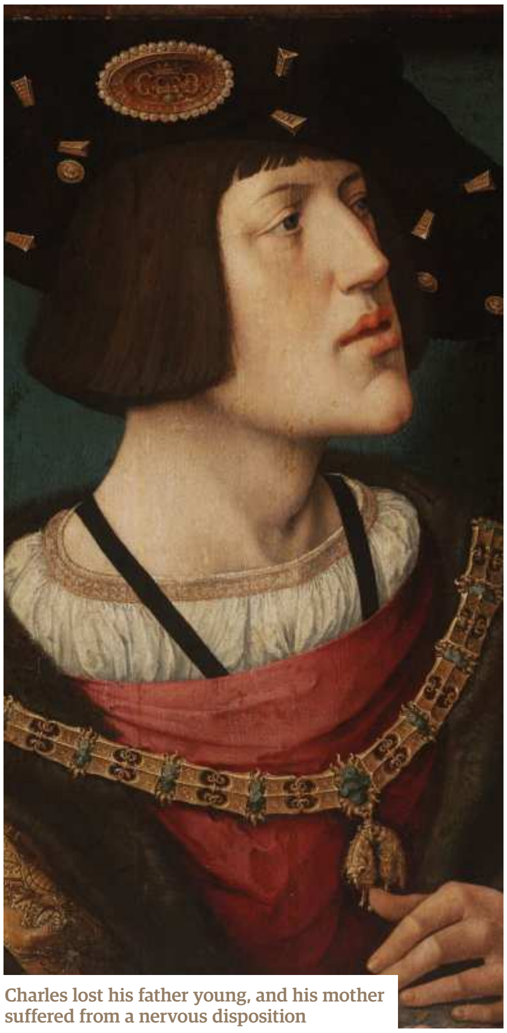
From the beginning, Isabella was a woman who knew what she wanted – to marry a king. Charles V to be precise. Daughter of King Manuel I of Portugal and Maria of Aragon, Isabella was born to be a queen. When she found out that Charles was considering a marriage with Mary Tudor of England, Isabella laid herself bare, proclaiming she would either marry him or enter a convent. Her determination won out, and her union with Charles created an alliance of power and wealth. However, when the two met it became much more than that. Charles and Isabella possessed the rarest of things in royal betrothals – genuine affection.

Charles trusted his wife immensely, and Isabella's intelligence led her to be a very capable regent queen of Spain during his frequent absences. Together they had six children, though only three survived to adulthood. Isabella was no mere throne-warmer though. She played an active role in policy-making and also negotiated marriages between the French and Spanish royal families.

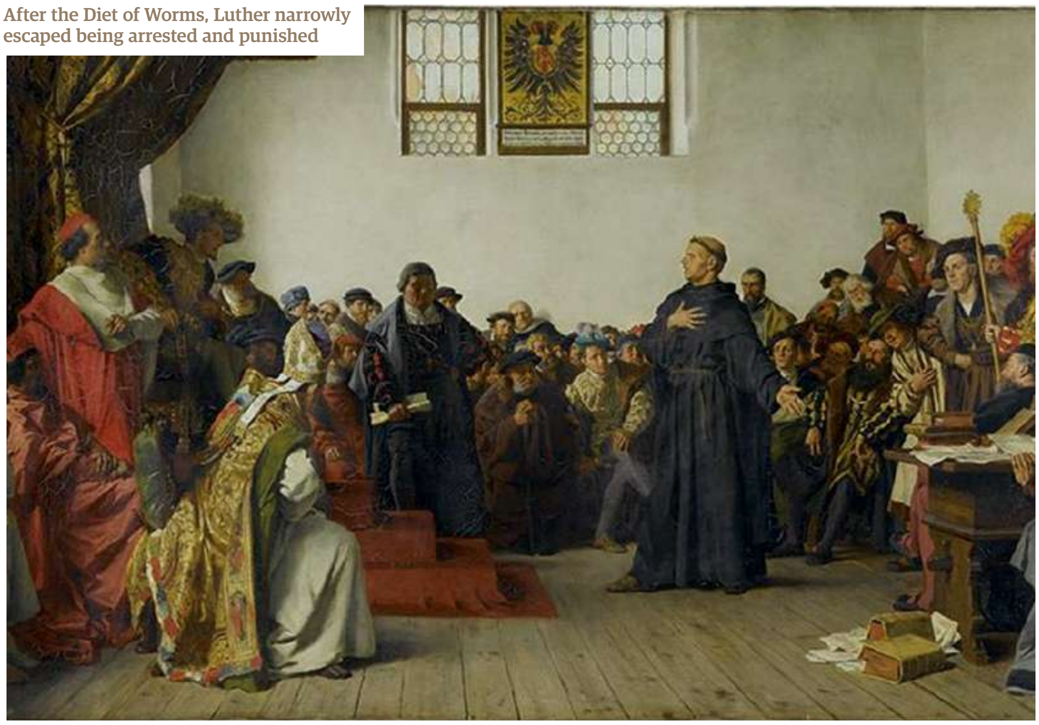
Tragically, Isabella's life was cut short due to complications from childbirth and suspected consumption. The loss hit Charles hard, and when he finally passed away he did so clutching the same crucifix his beloved wife had in her final moments.



Isabella scolded her husband for not writing to her often enough

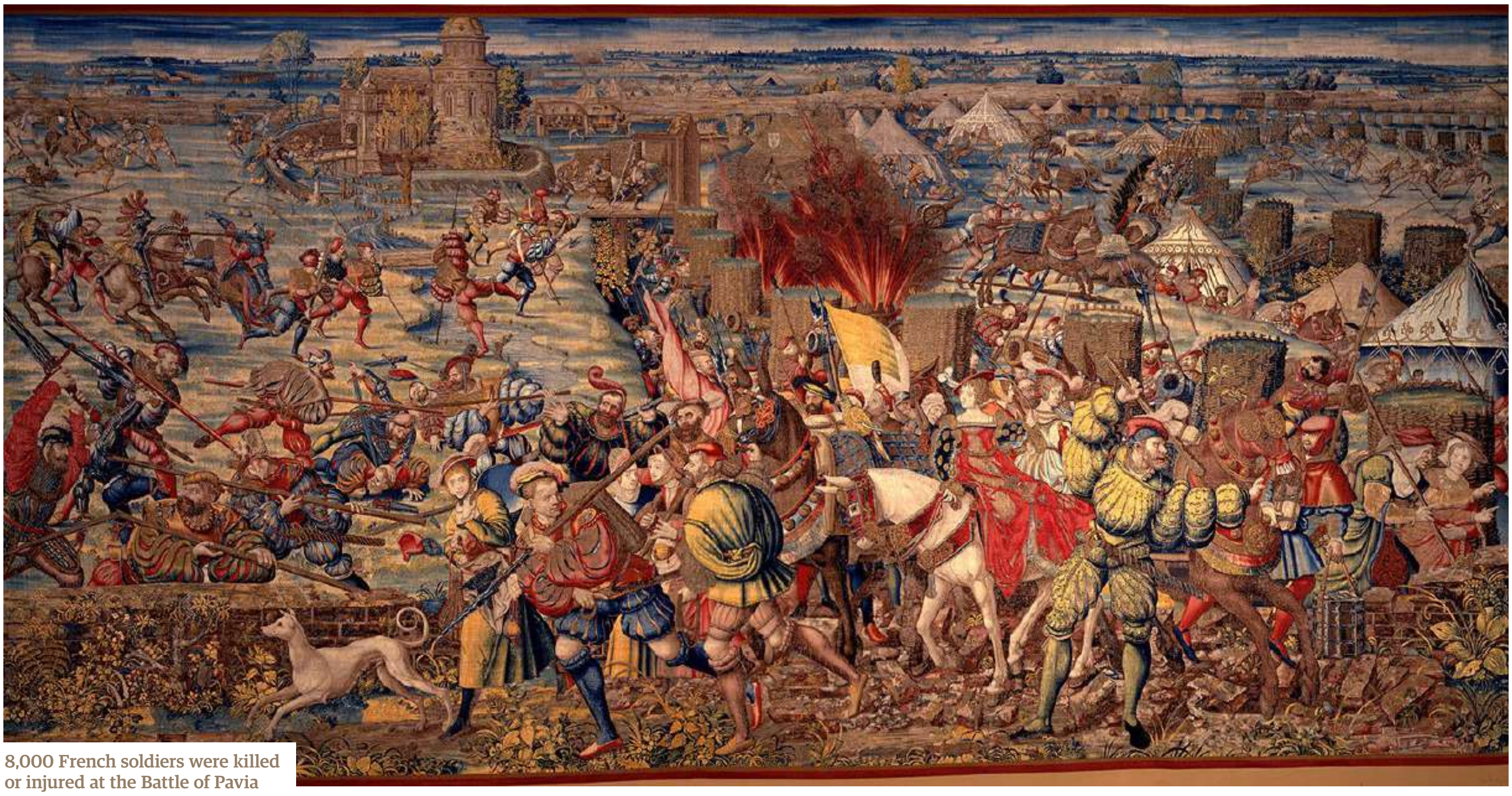


Charles lost his father young, and his mother suffered from a nervous disposition



After the Diet of Worms, Luther narrowly escaped being arrested and punished

> *"The pope did everything he could to escape Charles' influence, even moving the general council"*



8,000 French soldiers were killed or injured at the Battle of Pavia

This threat went far beyond just Hungary to other Habsburg provinces, particularly the ones that Charles had promised to his brother Ferdinand.

The Turkish advance on both land and sea was a huge threat to the Habsburgs, but Charles was so distracted with his conflicts in Western Europe that there simply was not the time – or money – to also fight that war. Something had to give. He needed Europe on his side, or his entire empire would crumble to nothing beneath the boots of Suleiman's armies.

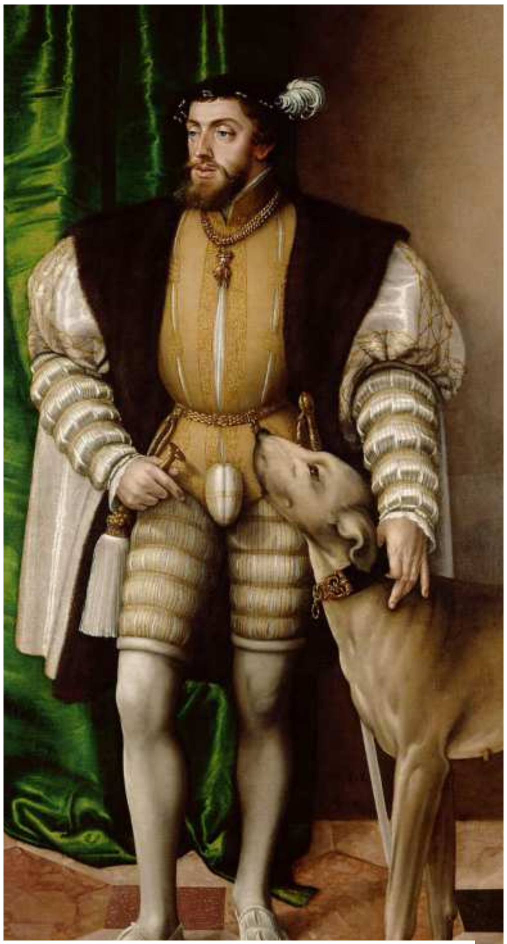
In 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg, both Charles and the princes were eager for a compromise, but all attempts at reconciliation failed. The German princes were now fully declaring themselves Protestant. This was not due to some sudden divine intervention or change of heart. It was instead a very effective way to break away from the emperor's power, their ultimate goal for generations. Faced with an advancing Turkish army, not only could Charles not get the princes on his side, but he also lost Henry VIII as an ally when the King of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church. The princes, instead of allying with Charles, saw an opportunity to strike the emperor when he was weak and distracted. They joined with Charles' worst enemy, France, to wage a united war against him.

The princes weren't the only enemies Charles was making; his brother Ferdinand was becoming increasingly disillusioned with Charles' staunch imperialistic moves. When Charles changed the role of successor from Ferdinand to his son Philip, the rift between the brothers deepened. By 1542 Charles faced a combined force of France, Turkey, the pope and the Dutch Duke of Guelders. The war fought between them was inconclusive and ended with the Peace of Crépy in 1544. However, in this treaty Francis I secretly promised Charles to help eradicate German Protestantism, which was also followed a year later by the pope. Desperate for allies to finally eradicate the German threat from within, Charles bribed his way to securing the support of Duke Maurice.

It had taken several wars to get there, but finally Charles had a united army capable of ridding himself of the pesky Protestant princes. Victory followed at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547, where the Protestant Schmalkaldic League was beaten by Charles and his allies. Charles' dream of a universal imperial authority, starting with a unified Catholic Germany, finally seemed within reach. However, he had made a costly mistake. The allies he made were fickle and, fearful of giving Charles too much power, deserted him en masse. France and its new king, Henry II, actively followed an anti-Habsburg policy, and the pope did everything he could to escape Charles' influence, even moving the general council away from the emperor to Bologna.

What had seemed like a victory at home actually achieved very little. None of the German powers, Catholic or Protestant, wanted what Charles wanted – a centralised, united Germany. At the Interim of Augsburg, he had no choice but to cede and compromise his position. It was a compromise that would not last for long though. France and the German princes, including Charles' old ally Maurice of Saxony, joined together in a powerful coalition against the emperor. By 1552 Maurice had invaded Austria. Fearful for his life, Charles fled. Defeated, humiliated and with no options left, Charles compromised on an even larger scale at the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, which gave Lutheranism equal status with Catholicism. So bitter was Charles at this turn of events that he refused to attend. The emperor, still determined to scrape together some semblance of unity, attempted to join his house with England, marrying his son Philip to Queen Mary I. However, this too ended in disappointment when Mary died childless in 1558.

On a personal level, Charles struggled to cope. By 1553 he was suffering from arthritis. He had also been suffering from recurrent attacks of gout since the late 1520s, each episode gaining in length and intensity. His history of depressive episodes were also no great secret, along with his insomnia. His closest advisors began to fear for Charles' life, with serious concerns over his mental health, stating, "Often he weeps for long periods and with such copious shedding of tears as if he were a child". It is no great wonder, considering the constant barrage



For some, Charles' abdication was not a sign of failure but the final act of a true Christian prince

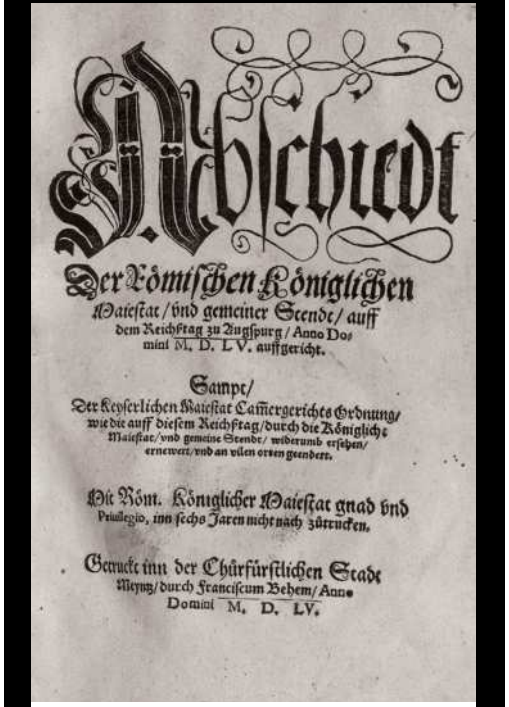
The Peace of Augsburg

The religious struggle of three decades ended in defeat for the emperor

For most of his adult life Charles V had faced his biggest threat: the Protestant reformation or, more specifically, Lutheranism. For Charles, this fight was not only about religion, it was about power. Though the Schmalkaldic League had begun as a religious group, their ambitions had quickly become political, and the resistance presented a very real threat to his empire. Unlike many religious groups, they had a considerable military force to back up their ambitions. Even so, initially it seemed that Charles would succeed over his enemies. Despite their superior numbers, the League suffered from inferior leaders and a lack of effective battle tactics, and they were thoroughly thrashed by Charles at the Battle of Mühlberg. With victory in his grasp, Charles forced his enemies to concede in the Augsburg Interim. It seemed the threat had been squashed.

But even Charles, with all his power, could not hold back the tide of Protestantism sweeping through Europe. Charles had tried to stop the torrent during three decades of war, and when the Protestants claimed a relatively small victory in 1552, it was the straw that broke the camel's back. Charles signed the Peace of Passau, granting Protestants freedoms and ending any chance of Charles achieving the religious unity he had dreamt of.

Three years later the Peace of Augsburg cemented the Lutherans' official status in the Holy Roman Empire. Princes were now free to pick their official religion – Catholicism or Lutheranism. Although this went some way to easing tensions, other groups, such as the Calvinists, were still not recognised, and tensions around this led to the Thirty Years' War.



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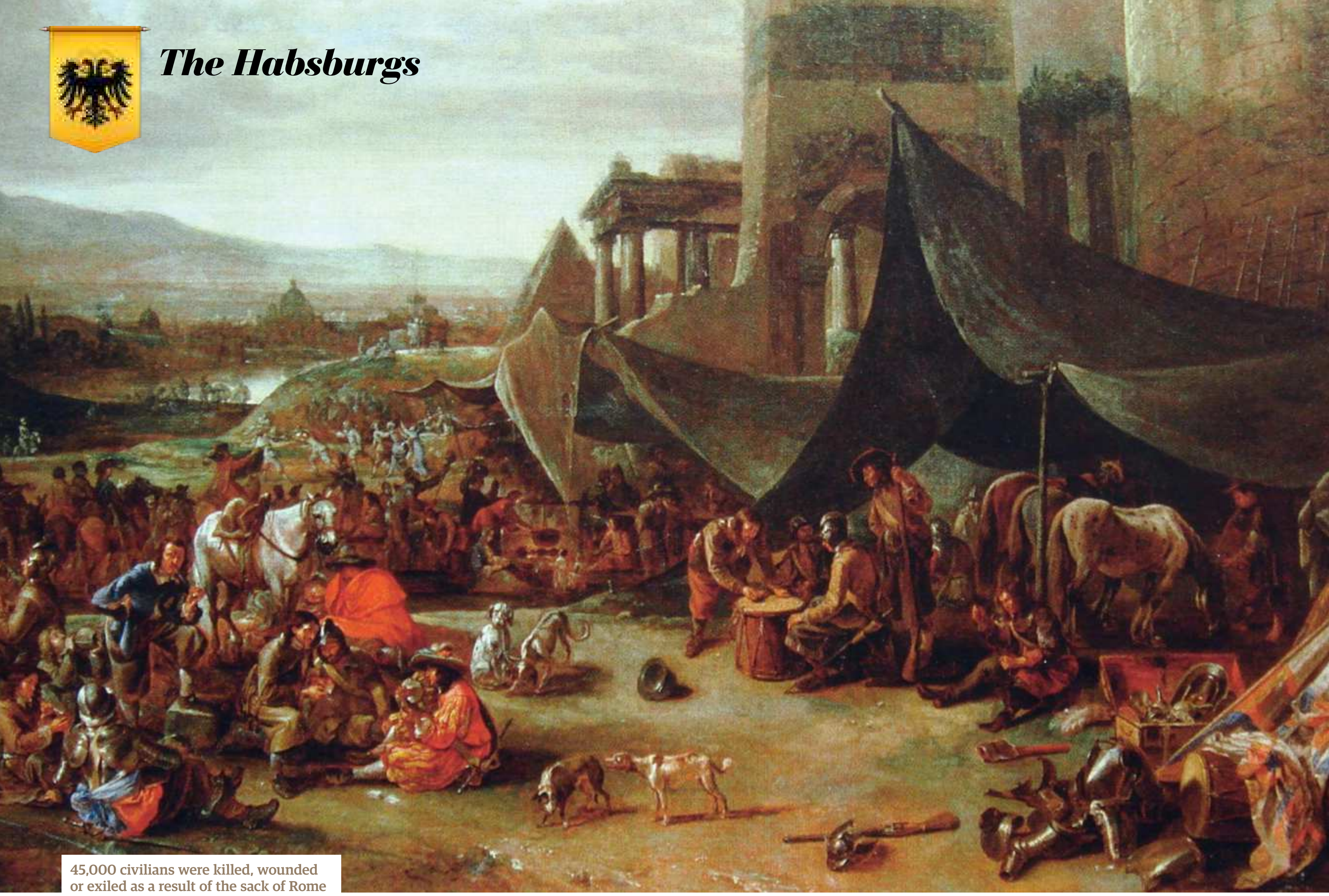
Calvinism was not allowed to be practised until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648



45,000 civilians were killed, wounded or exiled as a result of the sack of Rome

> "While another war with France waged on, Charles chose to abdicate his collection of crowns"

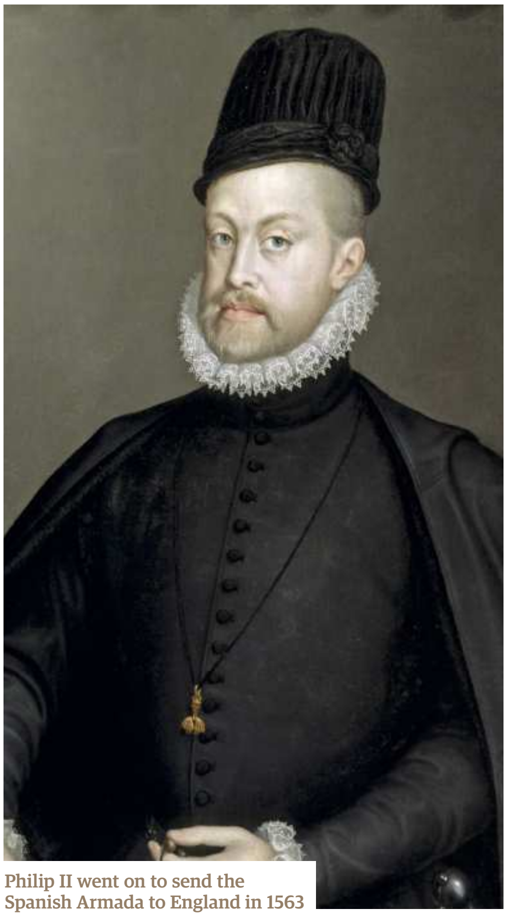
of failures that Charles faced, that he had a loss of confidence. The most powerful monarch in Europe had become a broken man.

While another war with France waged on, Charles chose to abdicate his collection of crowns. This was a lengthy process due to the amount of territories he held. Philip had already been given the Kingdom of Naples in his marriage to Mary, and in October 1555 he was also handed control of the Low Countries. At this same ceremony Charles relinquished his empire to Ferdinand and gave a moving speech. He lamented his inability to achieve peace for his people but claimed that all the wars he fought were ones forced upon him. It is said there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

By January 1556 Charles had abdicated from all his Spanish territories and declared his son king. Finally free of the burden of all his crowns, he left the Netherlands for Spain and retired near the monastery of Yuste, where he lived until his death several years later on 21 September 1558.

Although on the surface Charles' tale is overwhelmingly one of loss and defeat, he did achieve a great many victories, some of them particularly impressive. Charles was not only a conqueror, he was also one of the earliest opponents of slavery and held the first known discussion on universal human rights. He was a man of incredible character and determination in his pursuit of an impossible goal, and it was that goal that ultimately proved his downfall. The Holy Roman Empire was already crumbling by the time he inherited it, and Europe was far too complicated to be governed under one man's imperial rule.

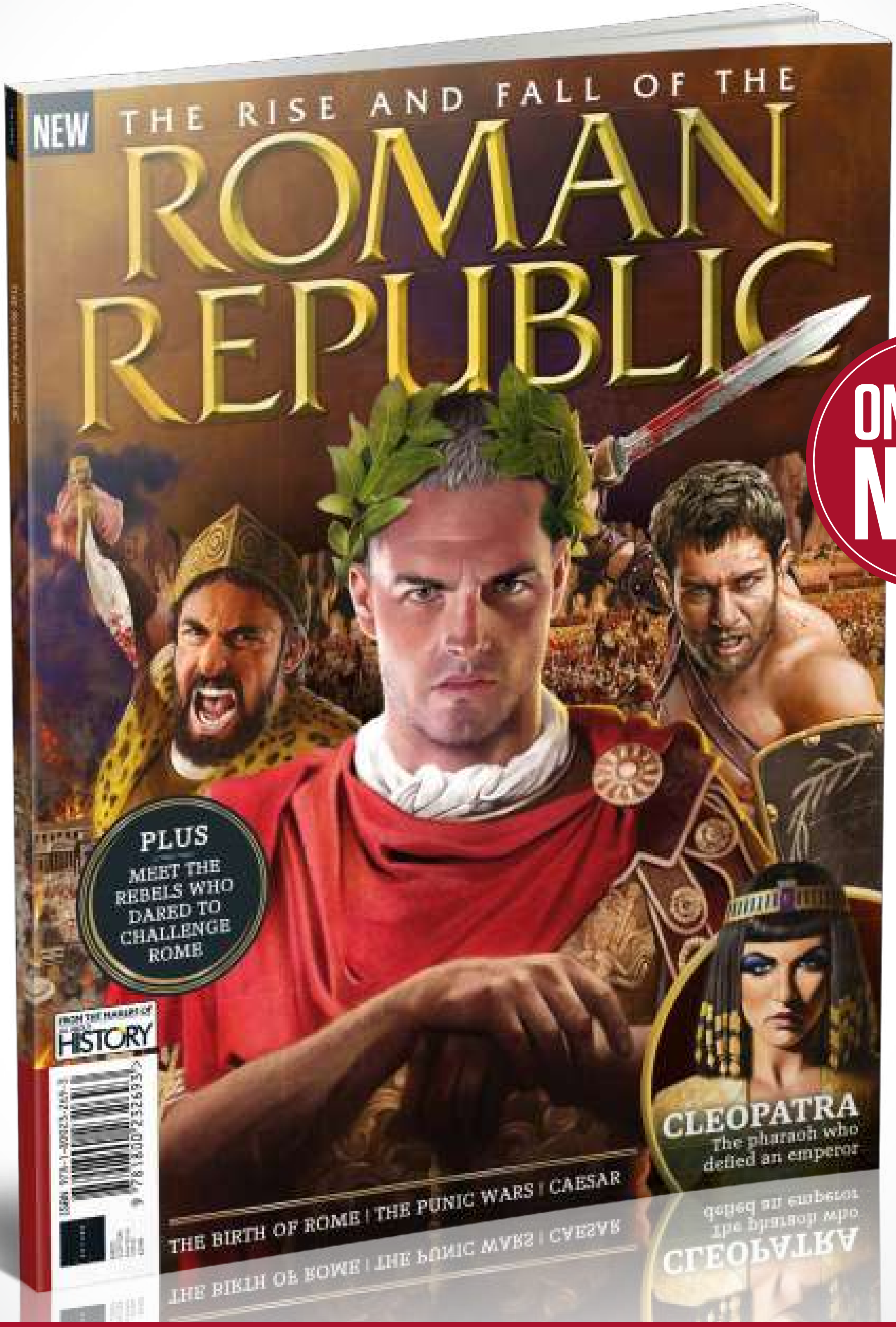
While Charles fought one enemy, another would consolidate power and attack. He faced an endless struggle to merely keep afloat, let alone combine these factions. The emperor's belief in his limitless powers cost him dearly. Had he perhaps aimed a little lower, it is likely that he would be remembered today for his impressive achievements and admirable traits rather than his failures.



Philip II went on to send the Spanish Armada to England in 1563

HAIL ROME!
HAIL THE REPUBLIC!

Forged in the flames of war, governed by a ruthless Senate and ultimately destroyed by one man's endless ambition, the Roman Republic endured numerous crises and yet changed the world. This is the story of how it did so.



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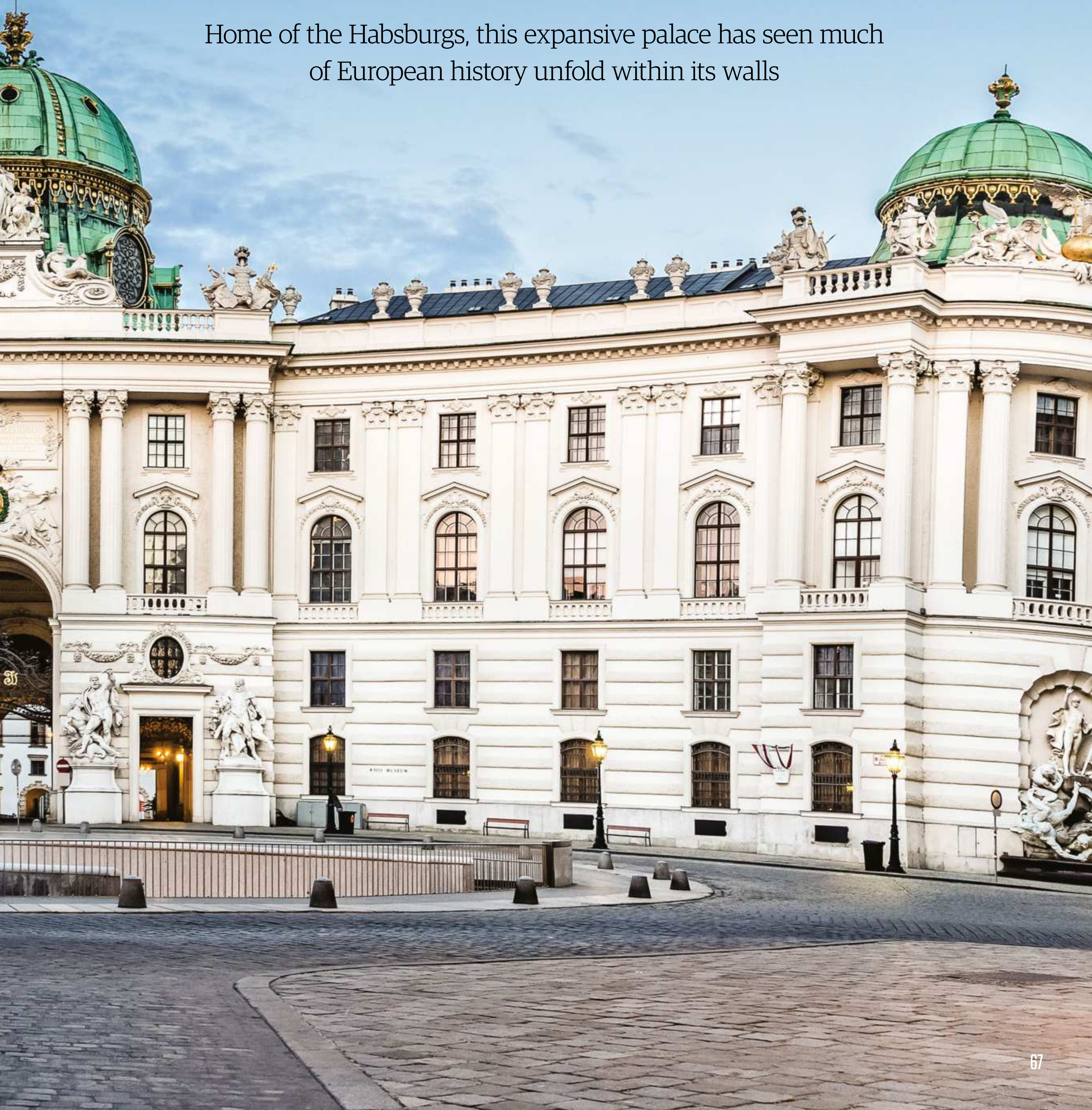
THE HOFBURG

Year built: Ongoing
Time to build: Work began 1279
Number of rooms: 2,500+
Style: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Classicism
Location: Vienna, Austria

Royal residence

THE HOFBURG

Home of the Habsburgs, this expansive palace has seen much of European history unfold within its walls



Timeline

1279

Construction begins
An archetypal medieval keep, with four turrets and a moat, is built. This would eventually become known as the Swiss Wing.

1552

Schweizertor
One of only a handful of Renaissance monuments in Vienna, this wing is built to house the Imperial treasury.

1558-65

The Stallburg
Construction begins on a residence for Archduke Maximilian, later becoming an art gallery and finally the site of the famous Lipizzaner stallions.

1660S

Leopoldine Wing
The wing that connected many separate buildings into a single entity and became the royal living quarters is masterminded by Emperor Leopold I and built in the 1660s.

18TH CENTURY

A Baroque extension
The famous Habsburg architect, Joseph Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, begins work on some magnificent extensions to the palace. After his death, his son would see his work completed.

1809

Burgeoning gardens
After the destruction of some fortifications by French troops, the surrounding land is repurposed into various green spaces with statues of Austrian generals.

1992

Rebuilding the Redoutensaal
A catastrophic fire guts the inside of the Redoutensaal. After extensive renovation work, the hall is reopened in 1998 and is still used today for grand functions.

2017

By the Beautiful Blue Danube
2017 sees the palace celebrate three historic anniversaries, with the 300th birthday of Maria Theresia, the 180th birthday of Empress Elisabeth and 150 years since Johann Strauss II composed and performed his famous waltz.

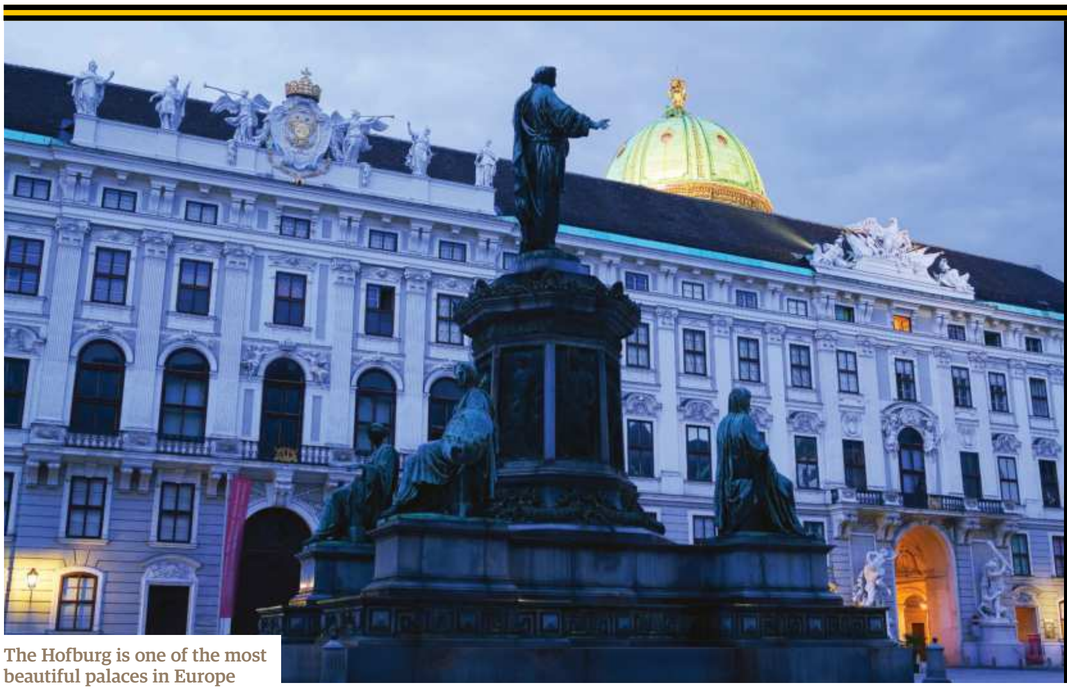
The Hofburg, a sprawling palace complex in Vienna whose name translates as 'royal castle', has been at the beating heart of European politics for hundreds of years. First constructed towards the end of the 13th century, the palace was originally home to the ruling dukes of Austria. It was then passed into the domain of the Habsburg empire, whose monarchs held sway over vast tracts of Europe for hundreds of years. It was also home to the German emperor for a short spell before becoming the seat of the Austrian president.

As well as being steeped in various cultures and European history, the palace's architecture also boasts myriad styles. For more than seven centuries new buildings have been added in Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Classicism designs, making the palace a reflection of the bright and vibrant court life that's existed within its walls.

Housing 18 groups of buildings, 19 courtyards and more than 2,500 rooms, the sprawling grounds occupy close to 24 hectares. No wonder the palace is often described as a 'city within a city'.

For those keen to delve into the history of the unique Habsburg dynasty, especially that of Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elizabeth, the Sisi Museum and Imperial Apartments stand to give an insight into the lives of these two fascinating monarchs.

Another rare aspect of the Hofburg is that it is still used in the day-to-day running of the country, with the offices of the president of Austria being located in what was once the royal residence wing. It is an extraordinary place where the past and present are synchronised, and visitors can feel the hustle and bustle of daily palace life while still being able to soak up its rich and fascinating history.


The Hofburg is one of the most beautiful palaces in Europe

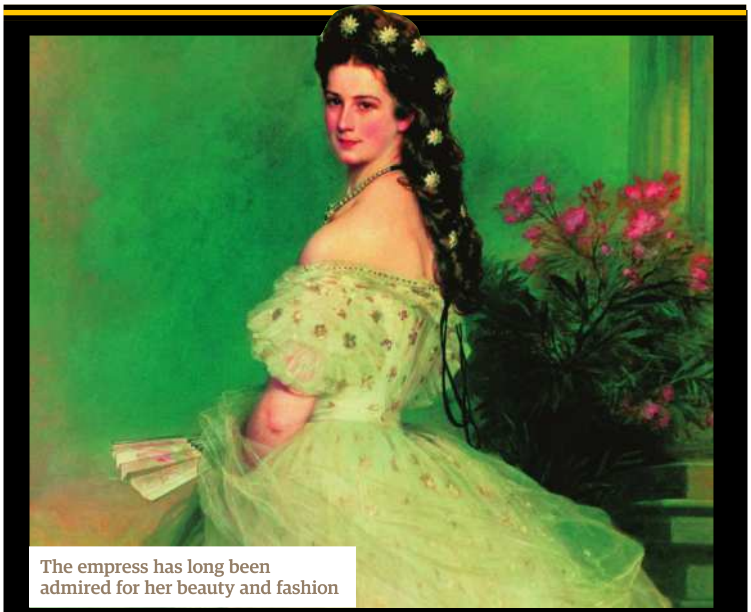
City within a city

The palace's architecture is constantly shifting and updating

Some of the greatest architects of the Habsburgs' dynasty – several generations, in fact – would work tirelessly for years to build the Hofburg into one of Europe's most unique and breathtaking palaces.

Over hundreds of years, the palace has grown from a squat medieval fortress into the sprawling complex that still employs and houses around 5,000 people today. The oldest portion of the palace is the Old Fortress, which, although renamed the Swiss Wing in the 18th century, is the only remnant of the original medieval keep still intact.

New buildings were frequently added until Emperor Leopold I connected them using an elegant Baroque style in the 17th century. The Leopoldine Wing became the permanent royal residence of the Habsburgs until their collapse. The stately rooms were then utilised by the Austrian president.


The empress has long been admired for her beauty and fashion

The royal couple

The lives of one of the most famous Habsburg couples ended in tragedy

The Emperor Franz Joseph and his Empress Elisabeth, still affectionately known as Sisi, were first cousins who became husband and wife in 1854. They were (and remain to this day) one of the most enduring and fascinating royal couples of the entire Habsburg dynasty and their history is intrinsically linked to the Hofburg.

Although infatuated with his bride – some even say obsessed – Franz Joseph was said to have emotionally neglected Elisabeth and their marriage was not always a happy one. They would spend a lot of time apart and would quarrel when together. One such exchange flared up due to Elisabeth's very particular diet, leading her to dismiss a dessert made specially for her, prompting an enraged Franz Joseph to exclaim, "Well, just give me that rubbish that our Leopold [the cook] muddled up." Despite these clashes, Franz Joseph would be crushed when an anarchist assassinated his beloved wife in 1898.

The gardens boast more than 200 different types of rose

The Volksgarten

Out of destruction comes beauty

The Napoleonic Wars that raged across Europe in the early 19th century altered both the physical and political landscape of the continent. The effects on the Hofburg can be plainly seen in the Volksgarten, or People's Garden. The area now inhabited by the green and verdant plants was at one time used as fortifications, until their destruction by French forces in 1809. Francis II decreed that the space become the first green area to be conceived as a public space, with the gardens opening to the masses in 1823.

In keeping with the Habsburgs' love of the classical world, the gardens are filled with statues of heroes and nymphs, with a small-scale replica of the Temple of Hephaestus, known as the Theseus Temple, being a particular highlight. As with the commemorations inside, there is also a monument to Empress Elisabeth flanked by numerous rose plants, for which the gardens are rightly famous.

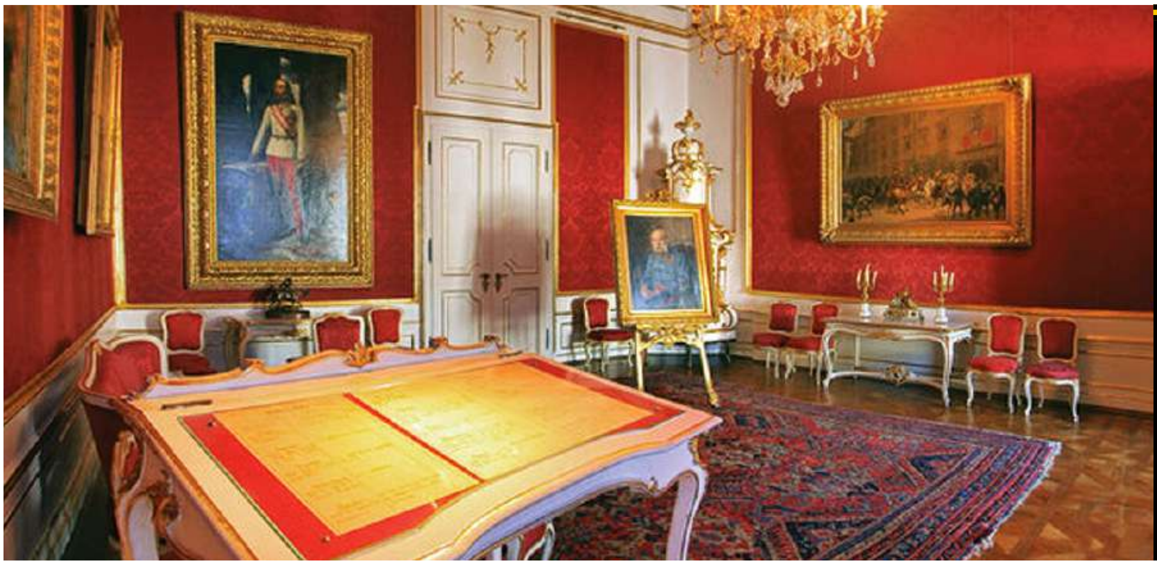
The court library

Inside a beautifully sculpted Baroque building in the palace grounds sits one of the world's most extraordinary collection of books – more than 3.8million, in fact.

The library has its beginnings in the Middle Ages, when Duke Albert III moved a collection of books from the Viennese vaults to the newly built library building. The duke also started translation work on Latin texts, having them converted into his native German. The oldest book contained in the library, a religious text owned by the duke, dates from 1368 and is a translation and illustration of the four Christian Gospels.

Emperor Charles VI, whose death sparked the War of the Austrian Succession, was the monarch to give the library a permanent home within the palace. Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, the architect whose designs the Habsburgs so admired, constructed the permanent wing, including some secret passages that are still used by staff to move unseen throughout the library The room also saw an influx of scientific works due to criticism that is was merely safeguarding knowledge, not pursuing it.

Aside from the breathtaking collection of books, one of the most awe-inspiring parts of the library is the Prunksaal, or state hall. The central structure of the library, its hall is flanked with marble statues of Habsburg emperors and Charles VI, patron of the library as we know it today, looks down from the domed ceiling, his image winged by heroes of Greek mythology.



Audience chamber

This room stands as an example of just how busy a monarch's life could be. Standing behind his lectern, Emperor Franz Joseph would hear hundreds of petitions from his subjects twice a week. The sheer number of cases kept each one confined to a minute or two – an emperor's time was precious after all.

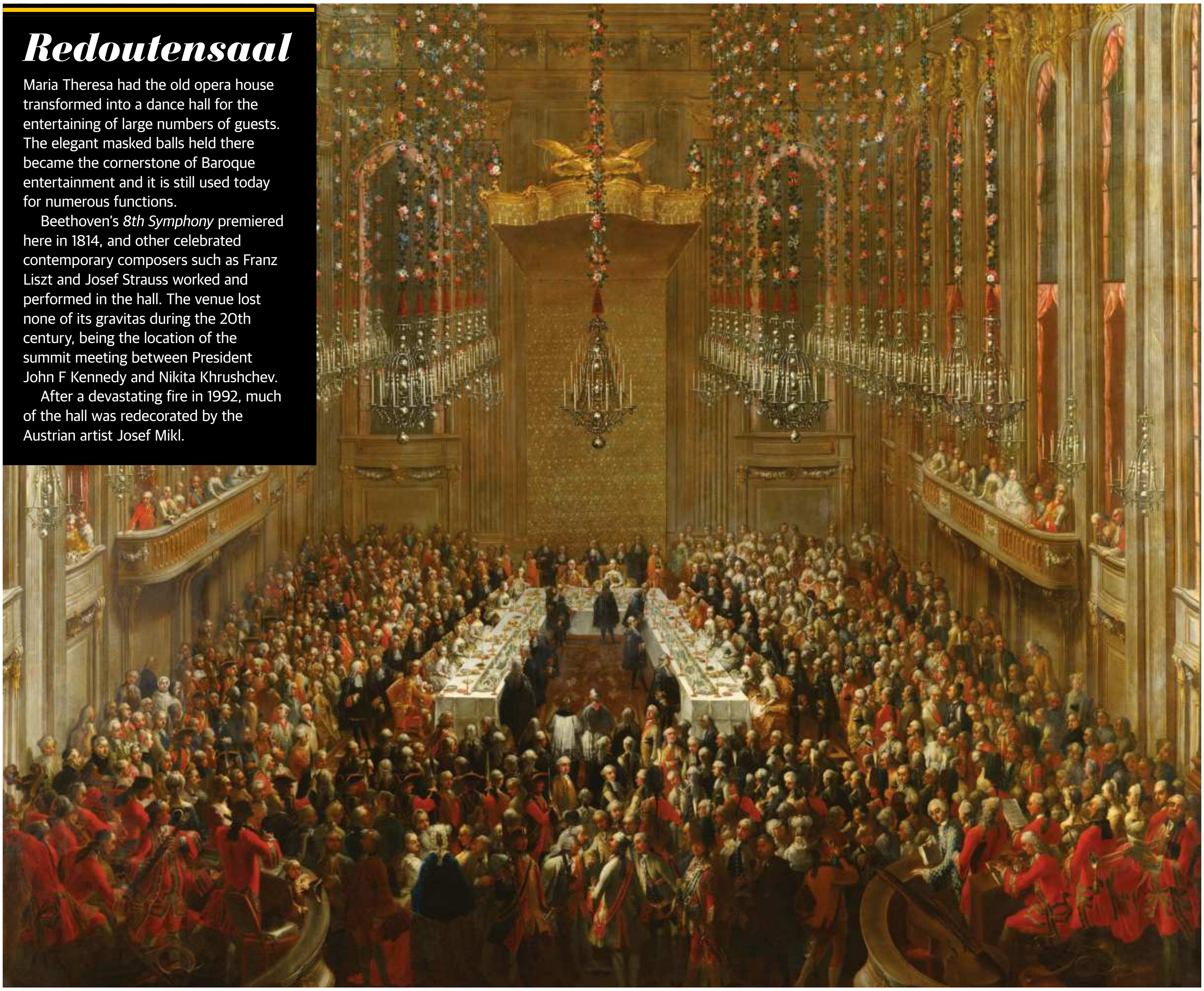
Franz Joseph was in the habit of keeping his friends up to date with his schedule, with one letter entry stating, "Yesterday I had 127, today I will be giving 108 audiences." Throughout his reign, the emperor would give audience to and hear the pleas of more than 260,000 subjects.

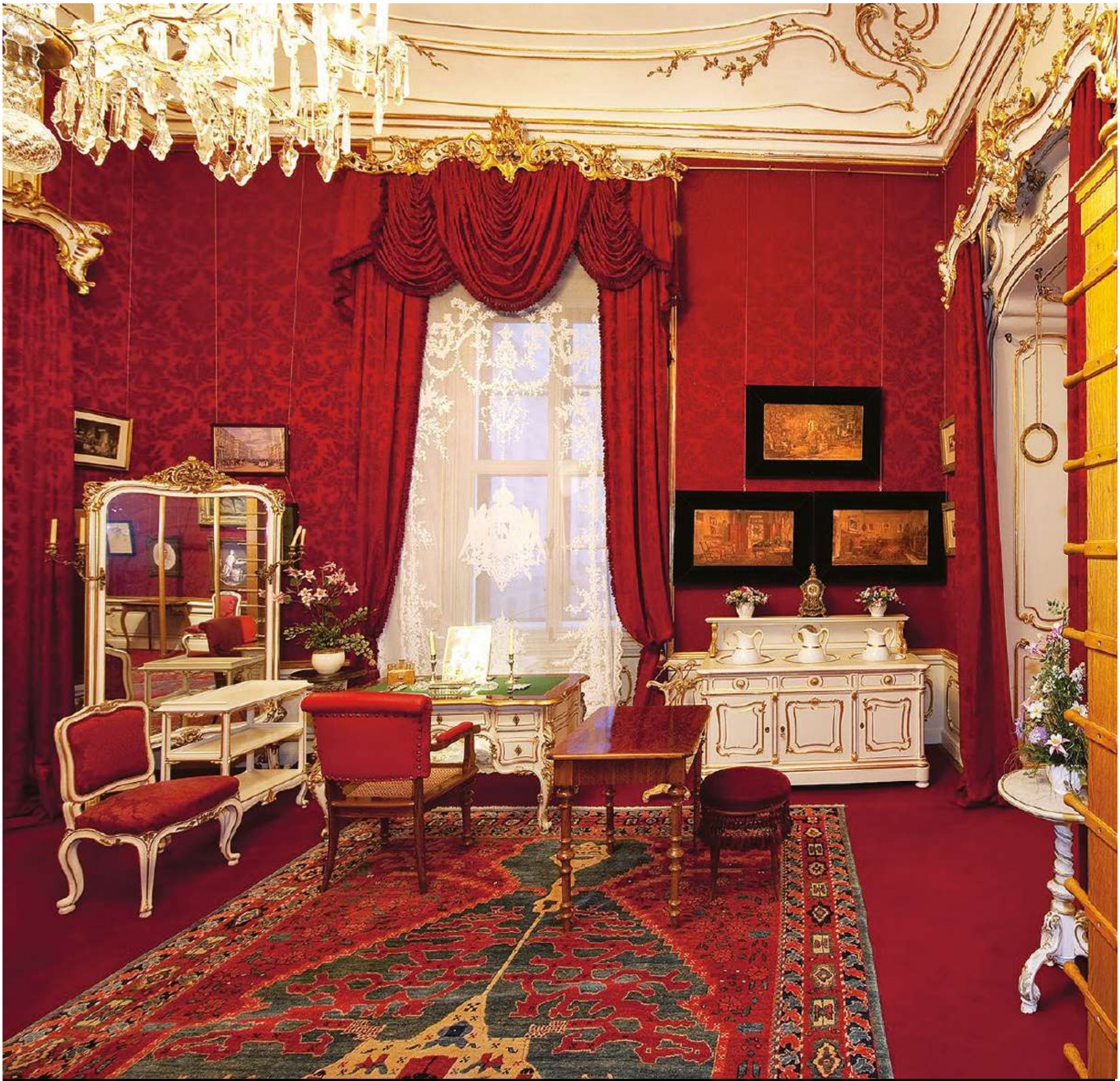
Redoutensaal

Maria Theresa had the old opera house transformed into a dance hall for the entertaining of large numbers of guests. The elegant masked balls held there became the cornerstone of Baroque entertainment and it is still used today for numerous functions.

Beethoven's *8th Symphony* premiered here in 1814, and other celebrated contemporary composers such as Franz Liszt and Josef Strauss worked and performed in the hall. The venue lost none of its gravitas during the 20th century, being the location of the summit meeting between President John F Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev.

After a devastating fire in 1992, much of the hall was redecorated by the Austrian artist Josef Mikl.





The empress' dressing and exercise room

This sumptuous room was one of Empress Elisabeth's most personal spaces and was reportedly where she spent most of her time. Famed for her elaborate hairstyles, she would begin each day with a two- to three-hour session with her most trusted hairdresser, Fanny Feifalik. Fanny must have cut quite the figure, considering this description by the empress' Greek tutor, Konstantin Christomanos: "behind the Empress' chair stood the hairdresser in a black dress with a long train, a white cobweb lace apron; though a servant herself, an imposing phenomenon."

While Fanny worked, the empress would pass the time by conversing with Christomanos, who'd teach her classics like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Extremely well-read, the empress would master seven languages in her lifetime, no doubt many of them learned during these morning rituals.

The room also housed Elisabeth's exercise kit to help her with her near-obsessive self-image preservation. This kind of equipment would have been an oddity at any European court and, along with the larger gymnasium, would have earned Elisabeth a degree of reproach. Nevertheless, the empress would use the wall bars, high bars and rings set into the doorframe for her daily exercises that she would offhandedly describe as "en passant". Hanging from the walls surrounding the empress during all of these activities were portraits of her husband, her favourite daughter and her dogs.

The dining room

While a far cry from our contemporary place settings, the dining room is laid out for a family dinner – the emperor's immediate family, that is. Large-scale banquets would only take place in the impressive state rooms of the imperial residence. The table settings always followed incredibly strict etiquette guidelines and each new course would herald a setting change.

The head of the family – Franz Joseph, in this example – would always be seated in the centre of the table, facing his guest of honour. Conversation would only be permitted with guests in your immediate vicinity, and only once the emperor had laid down his cutlery would a course end. Hungry guests need not have worried, though – anywhere from nine to 13 courses could be served, with the food carried from the kitchens in heated containers and kept warm by coal – and later gas – skillets.

The emperor's bedroom

Not a man who revelled in the comforts of wealth, Emperor Franz Joseph lived a rather spartan lifestyle. With the royal couple having separate bedchambers, he had a plain iron bed, painted brown, set up in his quarters – similar to other set-ups he had at other royal palaces around Europe.

An incurable workaholic, he would wake at 3.30am each day and bathe in his rubber bathtub. If he had attended a function the night before, he would allow himself an extra hour in bed. Aside from a grooming table, toilet table and prayer stool, the rest of the room would remain unfurnished.

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1480–1530

MARGARET OF AUSTRIA

How one European princess negotiated her way around a man's world to become one of the most powerful and remarkable women of her generation

Written by Elizabeth Norton

Although little remembered today, Margaret of Austria was one of the most remarkable women within the political realms of early 16th-century Europe.

Born in Brussels on 10 January 1480, Margaret was the only daughter of Maximilian, Archduke of Austria and his heiress wife, Mary, Duchess of Burgundy. She was named after her mother's beloved stepmother, Margaret of York (who also stood as her godmother), but with an elder brother, Philip, already in the nursery, her birth was of little dynastic consequence.

As a woman, Margaret's mother, Mary, had struggled to hold her rich inheritance following the death of her father, Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, in 1475. Burgundy, which was one of the wealthiest and most cultured states of late-medieval Europe, had already drawn the jealous eye of the kings of France, and Louis XI took the opportunity to assert his own claims to the duchy. Although the marriage of Mary to Maximilian calmed matters to some extent, hostilities were reignited in March 1482 with the sudden death of the young duchess in a hunting accident. Two-year-old Margaret suddenly found herself both motherless and an object of considerable political interest.

Under the terms of the Treaty of Arras, which was agreed later that year between Maximilian and Louis, Margaret was betrothed to Louis' 13-year-old son, Charles, and sent to France to be raised. The two children were married in France in 1483 and were referred to as king and queen after Louis' death shortly after. However, due to Margaret's extreme youth, they did not live together, with childhood marriages only binding once a couple had consummated their relationship. Margaret was largely raised under the supervision of Anne de Beaujeu, Charles' elder sister and regent of France: she was Margaret's first experience of a woman wielding considerable political power.

Margaret's childhood, in which she was raised as a French princess, was a happy one. She was well-educated along with other noble girls, including Louise of Savoy, who would become the mother of the future Francis I of France. She was also permitted to spend time with her husband, developing some affection for him.

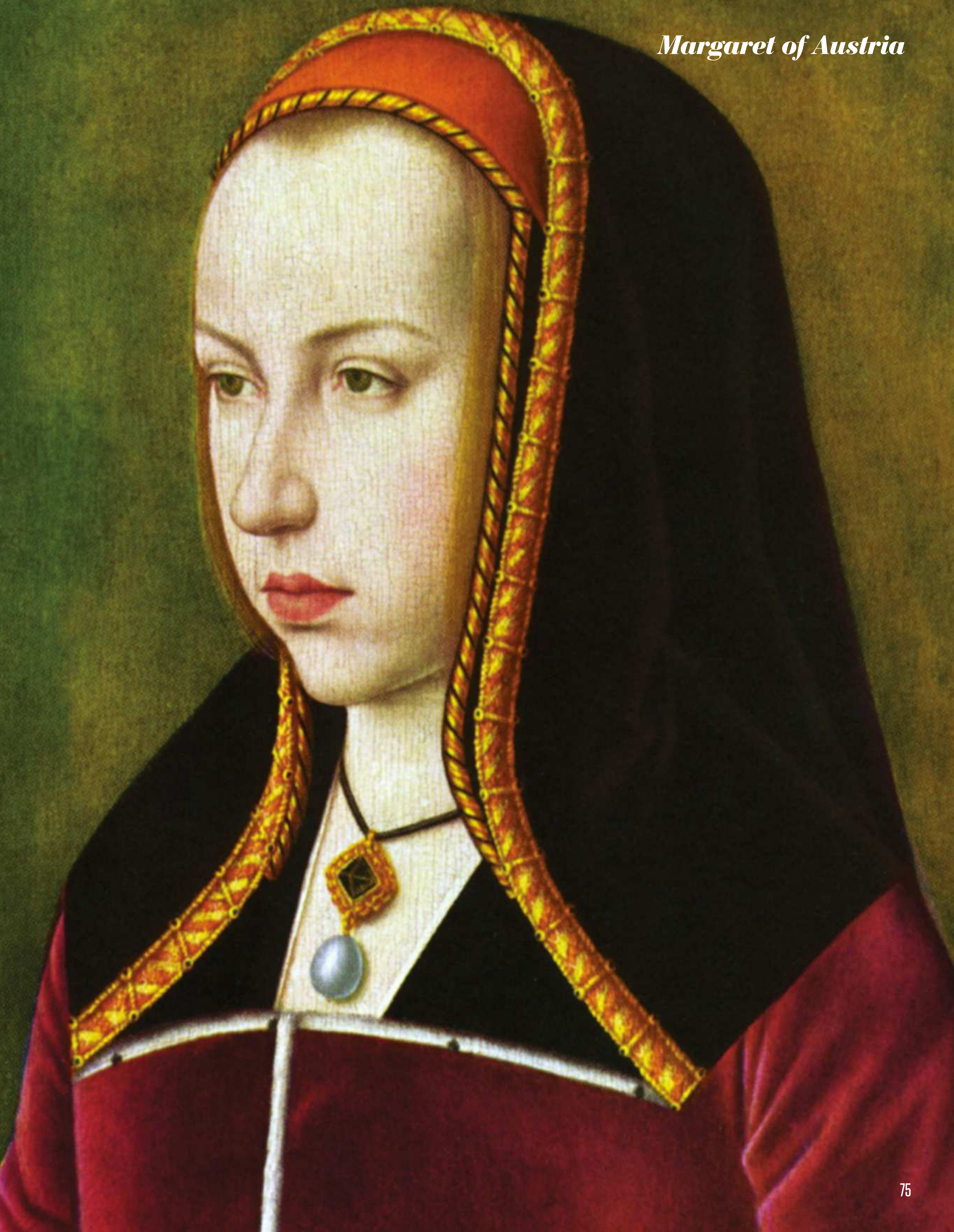
This happy time came to an abrupt end, however, when Charles married an heiress, Anne of Brittany, in 1491, repudiating his still-unconsummated relationship with Margaret. In one stroke, Margaret lost both her status as queen of France and her home at court, finding herself banished from the centre of power and

MARGARET OF AUSTRIA
1480-1530

Brief Bio

The second child of Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, Margaret was forced into three political marriages. After her third husband's death, Margaret was made regent of the Low Countries and she became Europe's most powerful woman.

Margaret of Austria

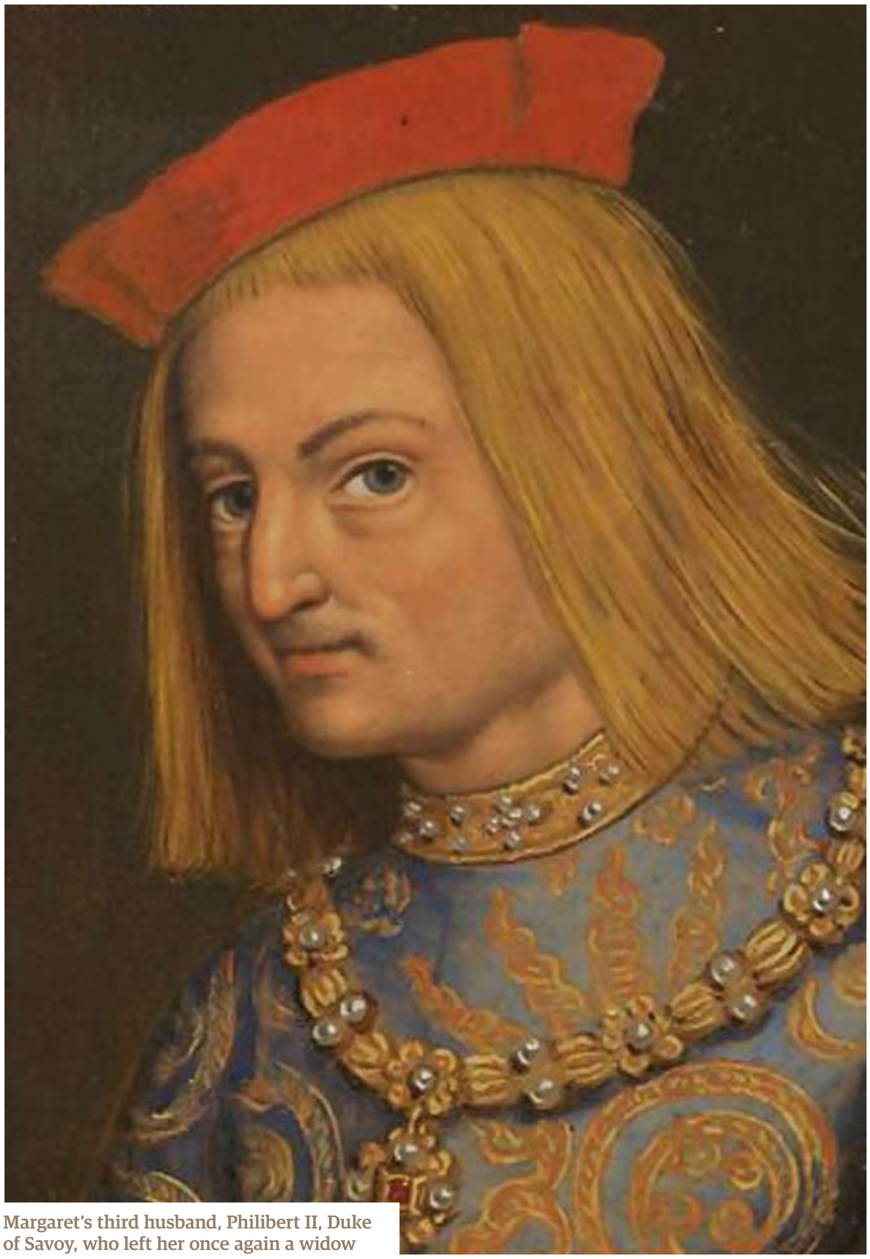


held effectively as a hostage while her return was negotiated between her father and the French. It was a devastating blow for Margaret, who bore a grudge against France until her death.

Margaret's political importance did not cease with the end of her marriage to Charles, however. She was welcomed back to Burgundy by her step-grandmother, who had overseen the upbringing of Margaret's brother, Philip. By 1493, Margaret of York, who took charge of her young step-granddaughter, was a political figure of some note and a further example of the power that could be wielded by a woman in the period.

The same year that she returned to the Netherlands, Margaret's father, Maximilian, became Holy Roman Emperor, succeeding his father in this elected office that traditionally went to members of the Habsburg family. Her father's imperial title increased Margaret's cachet in the European marriage market and she was soon the subject of a double betrothal, with her brother, Philip, engaged to Juana of Castile and Margaret to Juana's brother, Juan. As Prince of the Asturias, Juan was the heir of his parents, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.

Margaret had as little involvement in the negotiations of her second marriage as she'd had in her first. The voyage to Spain proved to be terrifying on the stormy winter seas, with Margaret at one point writing her own epitaph: "Here lies Margot, the willing bride, twice married - but a virgin when she died." When she'd departed her homeland for her first marriage, Margaret had been little more than a baby, but when she arrived in Spain in 1497 she was 17 years old and ready for marriage.


Margaret's third husband, Philibert II, Duke of Savoy, who left her once again a widow

Margaret's husband, Juan, had been raised to become the first monarch of a united Spain. He was 18 and enchanted by his pretty, fair-haired bride, who had inherited only a hint of the famous Habsburg jaw that marked her out as a member of the imperial family. Juan and Margaret fell in love, and the new Princess of the Asturias soon became pregnant.

The couple's married life was filled with fetes and entertainments, but it quickly took its toll on the frail Juan. He died on 4 October 1497, at the age of 19, after only a few brief months of marriage. Ferdinand and Isabella, who were grief-stricken at the loss of their only son, wrote to assure Margaret's father that "she is as strong and full of courage as you would wish her to be". To add to the family's grief, two months later Margaret gave birth to a stillborn daughter.

Margaret remained with her parents-in-law for two more years, learning Spanish and becoming popular with the people of Spain. She was close to her sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, who was destined to become queen of England and to whom she helped teach French. She also spent a lot of time with her mother-in-law, the pious Isabella, a woman who had snatched the crown of Castile from her niece years before and who would rule her kingdom energetically and with considerable skill for 30 years.

During this period the Spanish royal family experienced further losses with the deaths of their eldest daughter and her child. This left Philip of Burgundy's wife, Juana, as heiress to her parents' kingdoms, increasing Habsburg interest in Spain, especially after the birth of the couple's eldest son, Charles, in 1500.

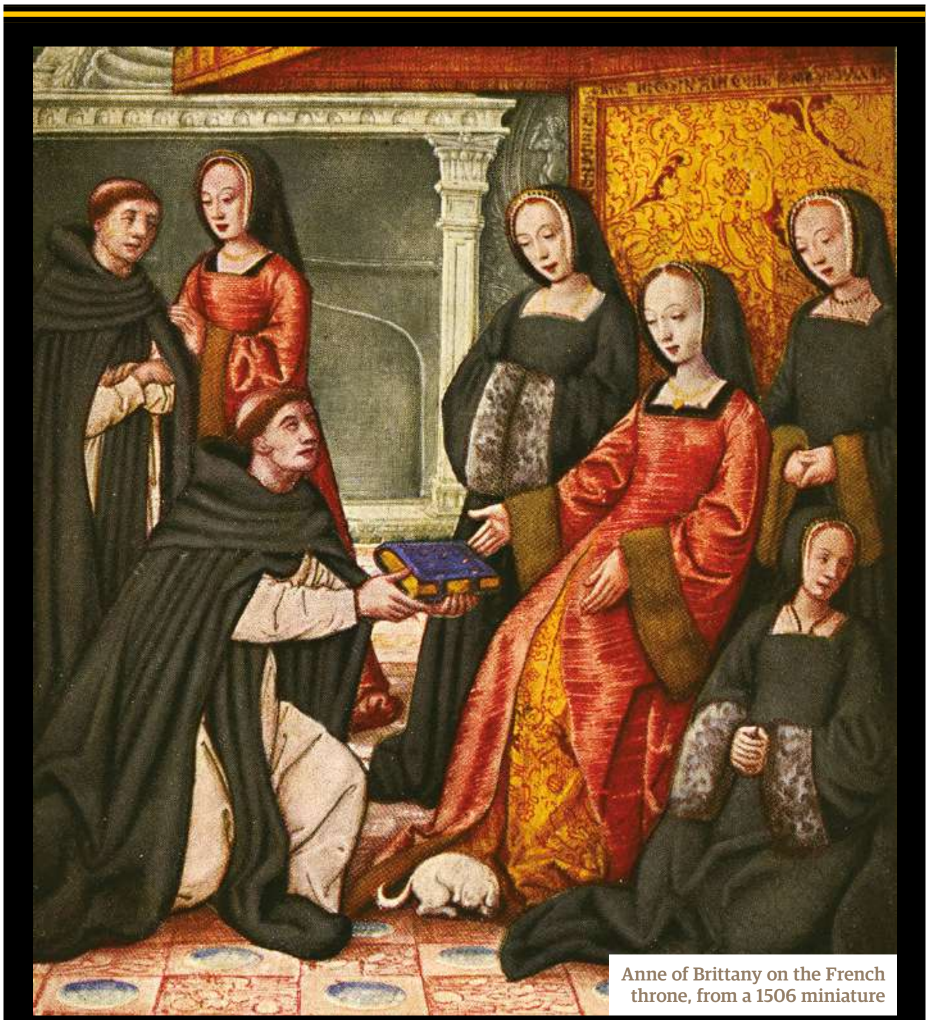
Although happy in Spain, Margaret knew she could not remain there indefinitely. She arrived home in the Netherlands only a few days after Charles' birth and was able to attend his baptism. Margaret, who still dressed in widow's black, settled back into life in the Netherlands. However, she must have been aware that such a homecoming was unlikely to be permanent, with both her brother and her father attempting to arrange new marriages on her behalf.

> "Margaret's influence over the Duke of Savoy was soon noticed by his contemporaries"

The Cathedral of Saint Mary of Burgos, where Margaret of Austria married her second husband, Juan

Reluctantly, the 21-year-old Margaret consented to a new match, taking Philibert II, Duke of Savoy as her third husband in December 1501. Nicknamed 'the Handsome', Philibert II was youthful, being three months younger than his bride. Naturally, the match was a diplomatic one – Philibert was an important ally in Maximilian's conflict with France over Italy.

While it was a marriage that the bride had no wish to see, the couple quickly became devoted to each other. Margaret's influence over her husband was soon noticed by his contemporaries, who considered the government of Savoy to be largely in her hands within two years of her marriage. The couple enjoyed hunting, while much of their time was spent in feasting and merriments. As she always did, Margaret proved adaptable, settling into life in Savoy. But once again, it was not to be permanent. After being taken ill while out hunting, Philibert took to his



Anne of Brittany on the French throne, from a 1506 miniature

The French queen-in-waiting

Although raised as queen of France, Margaret's hopes were dashed

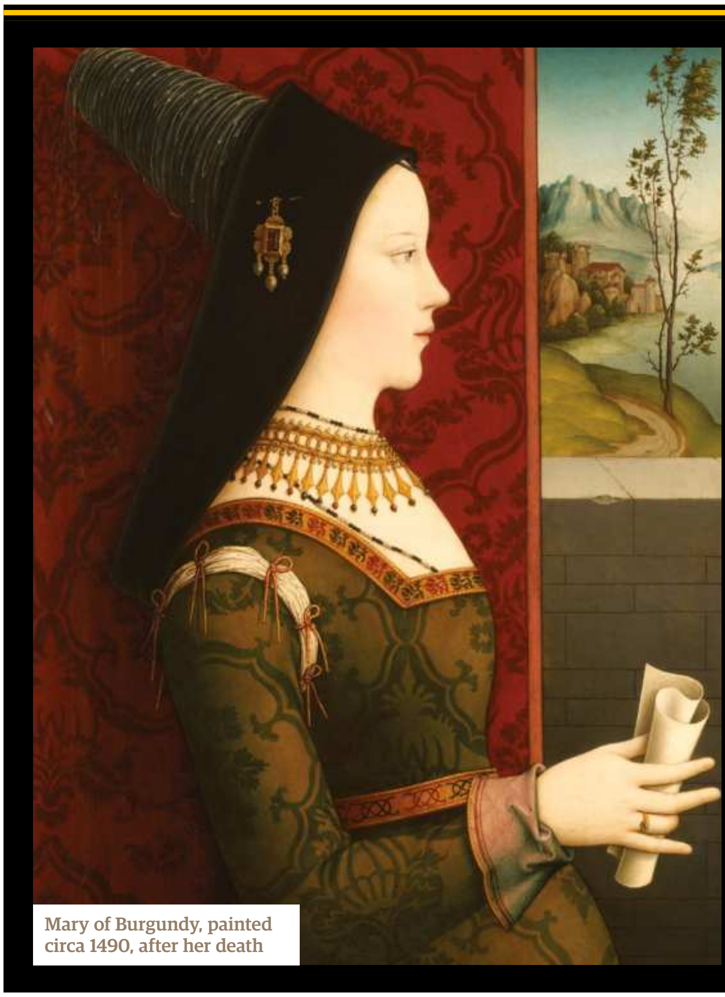
Margaret was only three years old when it was arranged that she would marry the future Charles VIII of France, who was then 13 years old. Such childhood betrothals amongst royalty were far from uncommon, with neither the bride nor groom involved in the negotiations.

Margaret was sent to France to be raised as its future queen, meeting her fiancé for the first time on 22 June 1483 and marrying him the next day. When her father-in-law, Louis XI, died two months later, she became queen of France, although due to her extreme youth she spent her time in the royal nursery.

Although a very young child, Margaret was treated with the respect due to her rank in France. As well as being addressed as queen, she was attended by 20 ladies-in-waiting, six attendant lords, a chaplain, a treasurer and other servants. She was provided with toys, including dolls, and exotic pets to amuse her.

The young Margaret believed her future lay in France, but this proved not to be the case. In late 1488 the Duke of Brittany died, leaving his young daughter, Anne, as his heir. The new Duchess of Brittany, who was only three years older than Margaret, immediately made an alliance with Margaret's father, attempting to secure the independence of her duchy from France. However, in 1491 Charles VIII invaded Brittany and forced Anne to become his wife instead.

With the announcement of Charles' marriage to Anne of Brittany, Margaret's hopes of becoming queen of France in deed as well as name were over. Since her marriage had been made in childhood and was unconsummated, it could simply be annulled. The demoted princess was humiliatingly forced to remain in France for a further two years while her father and former husband haggled over the return of her dowry. Although Margaret ostensibly parted from the French royal family on good terms in 1493, she remained furious about her rejection for the rest of her life, with her anti-French policies something that her childhood home would have cause to regret.



Mary of Burgundy, painted circa 1490, after her death

The Habsburgs in the Netherlands

Margaret's mother, Mary of Burgundy, brought the Netherlands into the Habsburg family

The Habsburg family, which had emerged as a great European power in the medieval period, were famous for their ability to marry well. They acquired many of the titles and territories they held through marriage, including their claim to the Netherlands.

The Dukes of Burgundy, who ruled the Netherlands in the medieval period, were famous for their wealth as well as the splendour and culture of their courts. When Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, died in 1477, he left only a daughter – Mary – to succeed him.

Mary of Burgundy was the richest heiress in Europe and immediately caught the attention of the French King Louis XI, who coveted the inheritance and invaded the duchy. Concerned by the threat to Burgundy's independence, Mary married Maximilian of Austria, who was then the son of the Holy Roman Emperor. It was a surprisingly happy – albeit brief – union, which placed the Habsburg dynasty, of which Maximilian was a member, in control in the Netherlands.

Following Mary of Burgundy's death, the Netherlands were inherited by her young son, Philip, before they then passed to his son, Charles, in 1506. Charles would later succeed to the throne of Spain on the death of his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand of Aragon, while he inherited the Habsburg lands on the death of his paternal grandfather. At the time of his retirement in 1556, the Netherlands remained tied to Spain under Philip II.

Philip's role as King of Spain meant that he was a largely absent ruler, just as his father had been. He therefore struggled to retain control over the Netherlands, particularly since, by the second half of the 16th century, many of the people of the Netherlands had become Protestants.

The Eighty Years War, which saw the Netherlands rebel against Spanish rule, began in 1568, with many in Europe viewing the conflict as one based primarily on religion. The war attracted considerable support from English Protestants, for example, with Elizabeth I sending aid to the Dutch rebels. In 1581 the provinces of the Netherlands formally proclaimed their independence, ending more than a century of Habsburg rule.

> "Her father considered that she fought 'with the courage of a man and not that of a woman'"

bed. He died just over a week later on 10 September 1504, at the age of 24.

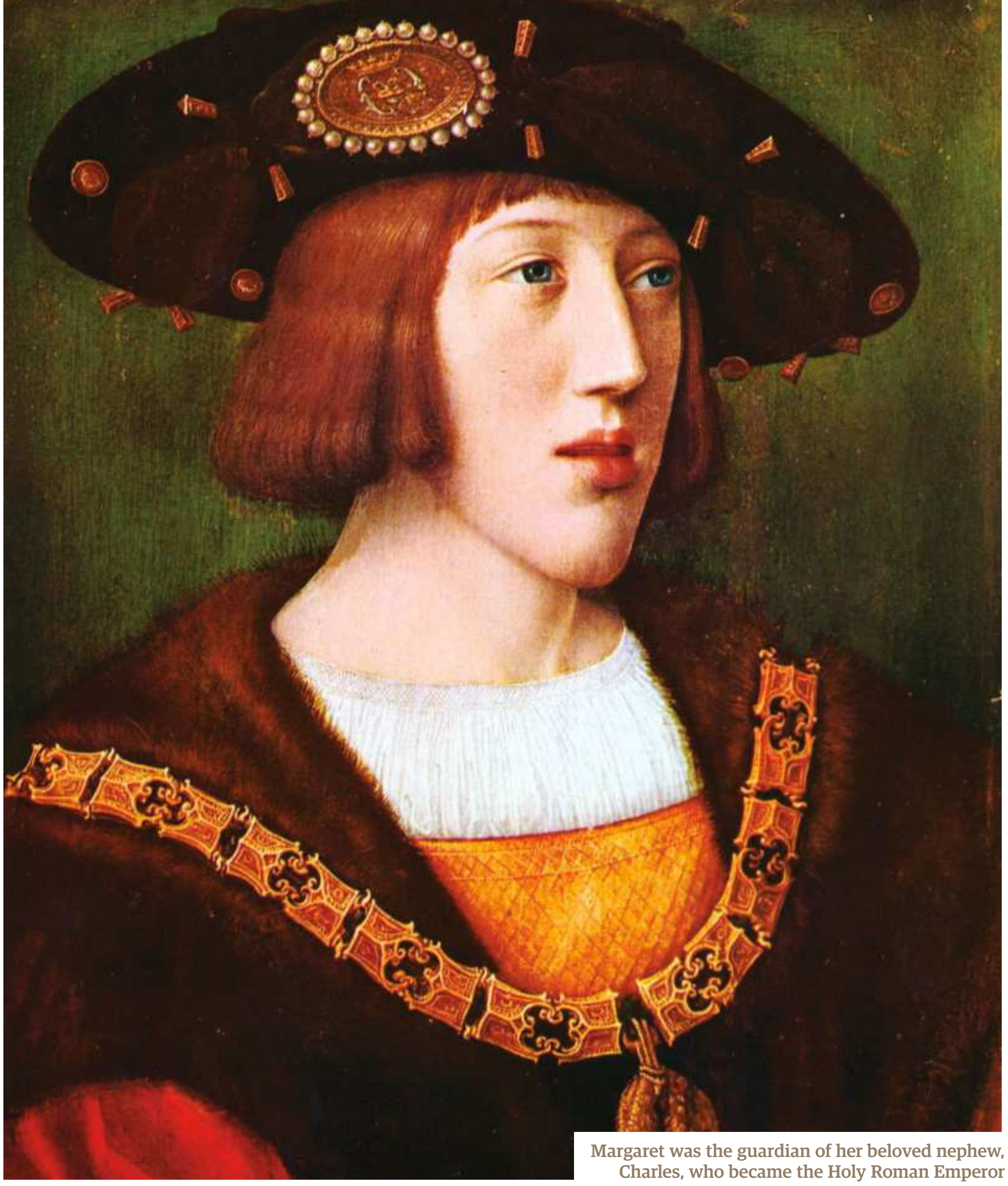
Devastated by her loss, Margaret returned home to the Netherlands. Although the veteran of three arranged marriages, it was not clear that her marital service to further the ambitions of the Habsburgs had ended. Following the death of Isabella of Castile in November 1504, Margaret's brother, Philip, ascended to the throne of Castile alongside his wife, Juana, which brought him into conflict with his father-in-law, Ferdinand of Aragon. In an attempt to build support for his own claims, Philip secretly offered Margaret in marriage to Henry VII of England. Twice a widow and growing in confidence, Margaret was able to refuse, declaring that "although an obedient daughter, [she] will never agree to so unreasonable a marriage". Having loved and lost three husbands, Margaret had no desire to ever embark on matrimony again, in spite of her father's personal pleas that she wed the English king.

Margaret was also increasingly tied up in the politics of the Netherlands. The marriage of Philip and Juana, although passionate, was famously turbulent, with Margaret consulted by the agents of both parties on the couple's differences and the rumours that Philip meant to lock Juana away and rule Castile alone. Such plans were abruptly halted on 25 September 1506, when Philip died suddenly in Spain. Margaret had always been devoted to her only sibling, composing an epitaph in which she set out her sorrow, complaining that "Nor was it enough the most unfortunate daughter of Caesar / To have lost a much-beloved husband / But also bitter death steals the only brother." The unstable Juana, too, was devastated by the loss. She was eventually sent to the Royal Convent of Santa Clara, where she spent the rest of her long life.

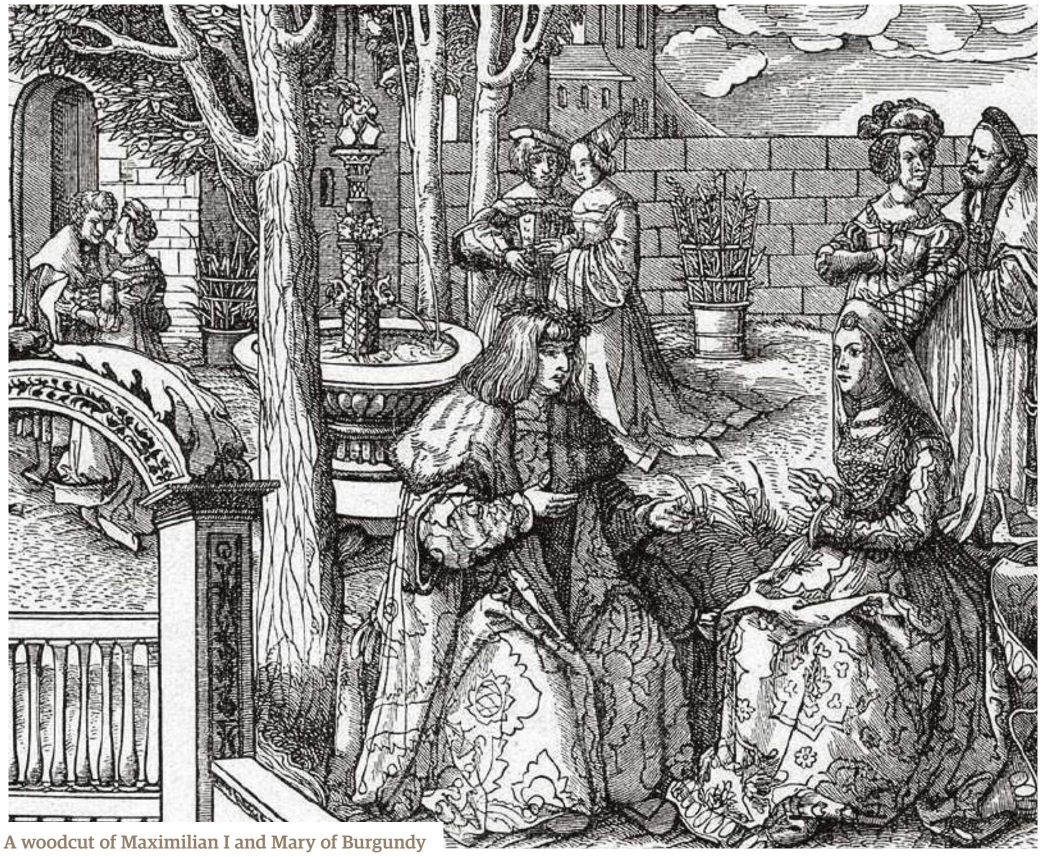
Philip's death left Margaret as Maximilian's only surviving child and the person in whom he placed his greatest trust. Maximilian refused to allow Philip and Juana's children to travel with them in Spain and, when he was offered both the regency and the guardianship of the children in the Netherlands, he instead requested the appointment for Margaret. On 18 March 1507, Maximilian issued letters patent, conferring the regency on his daughter. In one stroke she became the most powerful woman in Europe.

For Margaret, who had been born in the Netherlands, her regency was the first time that she moved from pawn to political player. Dressed in mourning for Philip, she made a ceremonial entry to Brussels in April before establishing her court at Malines. Although ruling on behalf of her seven-year-old nephew, Charles (whose education and upbringing Margaret oversaw), she ruled effectively as Duchess of Burgundy.

Margaret's homeland was a diverse place, divided into 17 provinces in which several different languages were spoken. The Netherlands was at the centre of all European trade networks. It was also a place at the centre of the rivalry between the Holy Roman Empire and France, with the



Margaret was the guardian of her beloved nephew, Charles, who became the Holy Roman Emperor



A woodcut of Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy

new regent required to do homage for Burgundy to the king of France, as well as raise money to pay the troops engaged in the Netherlands' war in the Duchy of Guelders. Margaret enjoyed an early diplomatic success when she was able to persuade Henry VII of England to agree a new trade treaty with the Netherlands, which also provided for the betrothal of her nephew, Charles, with Henry's daughter, Mary.

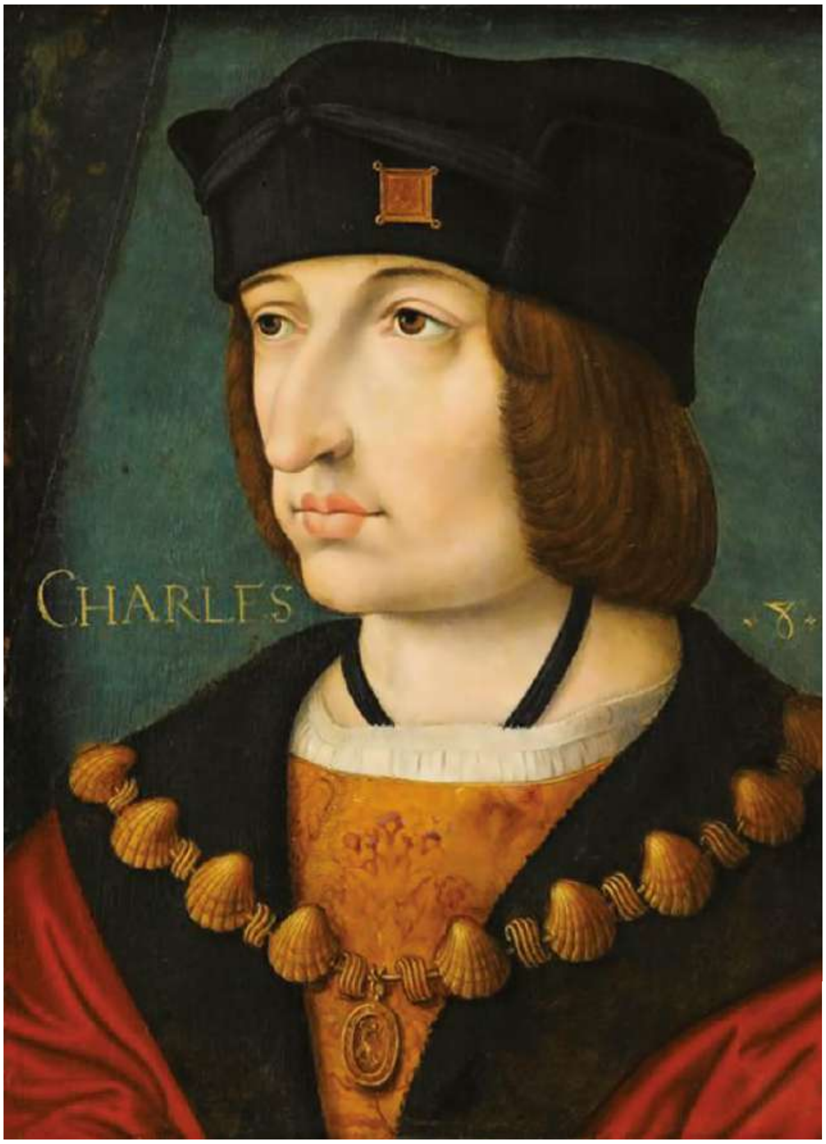
The English king's willingness to acquiesce in this matter might, in part, have been due to his continuing pursuit of Margaret's hand in marriage, which she resolutely refused to consider. In this, she held out against her father's persuasions, with Maximilian writing to her in September 1507 to assure her that "you will not feel yourself a prisoner in England". He had also suggested that she might return to the Netherlands for three or four months a year in order to maintain her rule.

Firm in her resolve not to remarry, Margaret threw her energies into raising her nephews and nieces - Eleanor, Charles, Isabella, Ferdinand and Mary - who had been effectively orphaned by Philip's death and Juana's incarceration. One child, Catherine, remained with her mother. Margaret was deeply involved in the children's upbringing, often writing to her father to give details of their daily lives and her concerns over their education and health. She also presided over her own household of servants and attendants, famously taking the young Anne Boleyn into her service in 1513 after she had become friendly with Anne's father, the English ambassador to her court.

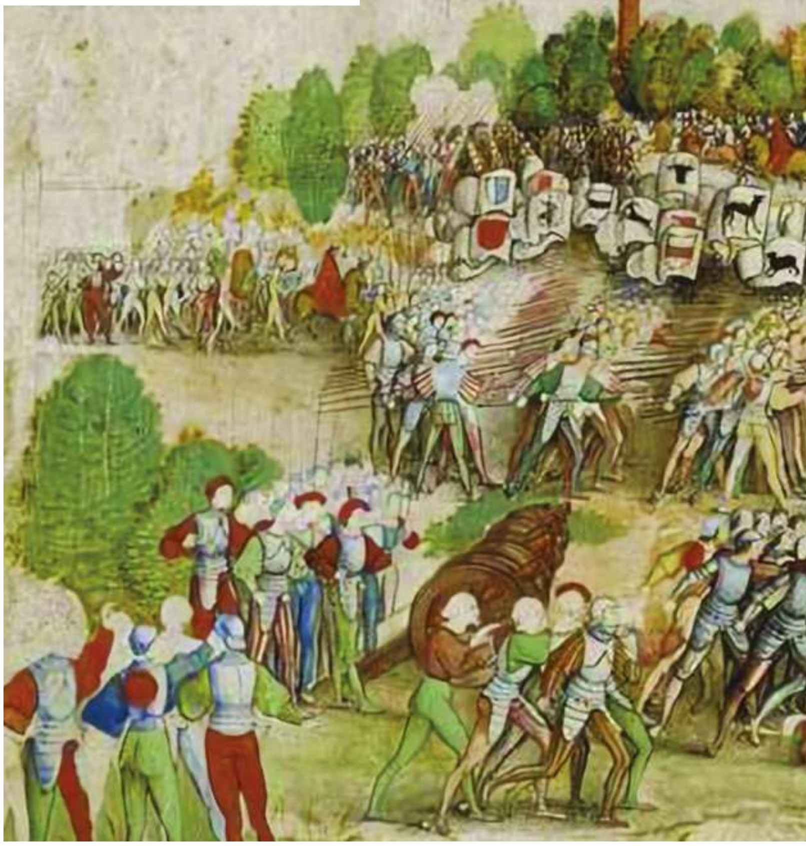
Although she was under her father's authority, Margaret was able to gain more independence and power as the years progressed, at one stage even threatening to return to her dower lands in Savoy if he did not acquiesce to her wishes. She was also renowned for her negotiation skills, being called upon in 1508 to act as representative for both Maximilian and Ferdinand of Aragon (who shared a mutual heir in her nephew, Charles) at a meeting with the French at Cambrai. Given the shameful way in which Margaret's French marriage had ended, she could be forgiven for enjoying a wry sense of satisfaction in finding herself, as regent of the Low Countries, an equal partner around the negotiating table.

As she admitted, the negotiations "often cost us a bad headache", yet she was triumphant. It was agreed that many of the conflicts with France would be placed on hold until Charles reached his majority, while the question of Guelders was also considered. Peace was finally sealed on 10 December 1508, with the parties agreeing to turn their attentions towards war in Italy.

Margaret was also involved in the conflict with Guelders which, in spite of the discussions at Cambrai, continued to rumble on. This conflict, which would eventually last for around 40 years, concerned the question of the duchy of Guelders and its status in relation to Burgundy. The duchy had originally been claimed by Margaret's grandfather, Charles the Bold, with his Habsburg



Margaret's first husband, Charles VIII of France, who abandoned her in favour of the wealthy heiress, Anne of Brittany



The Battle of Marignano between France and the Swiss Confederacy, part of the War of the League of Cambrai

> "Rumours soon abounded that the regent and Brandon were secretly engaged"

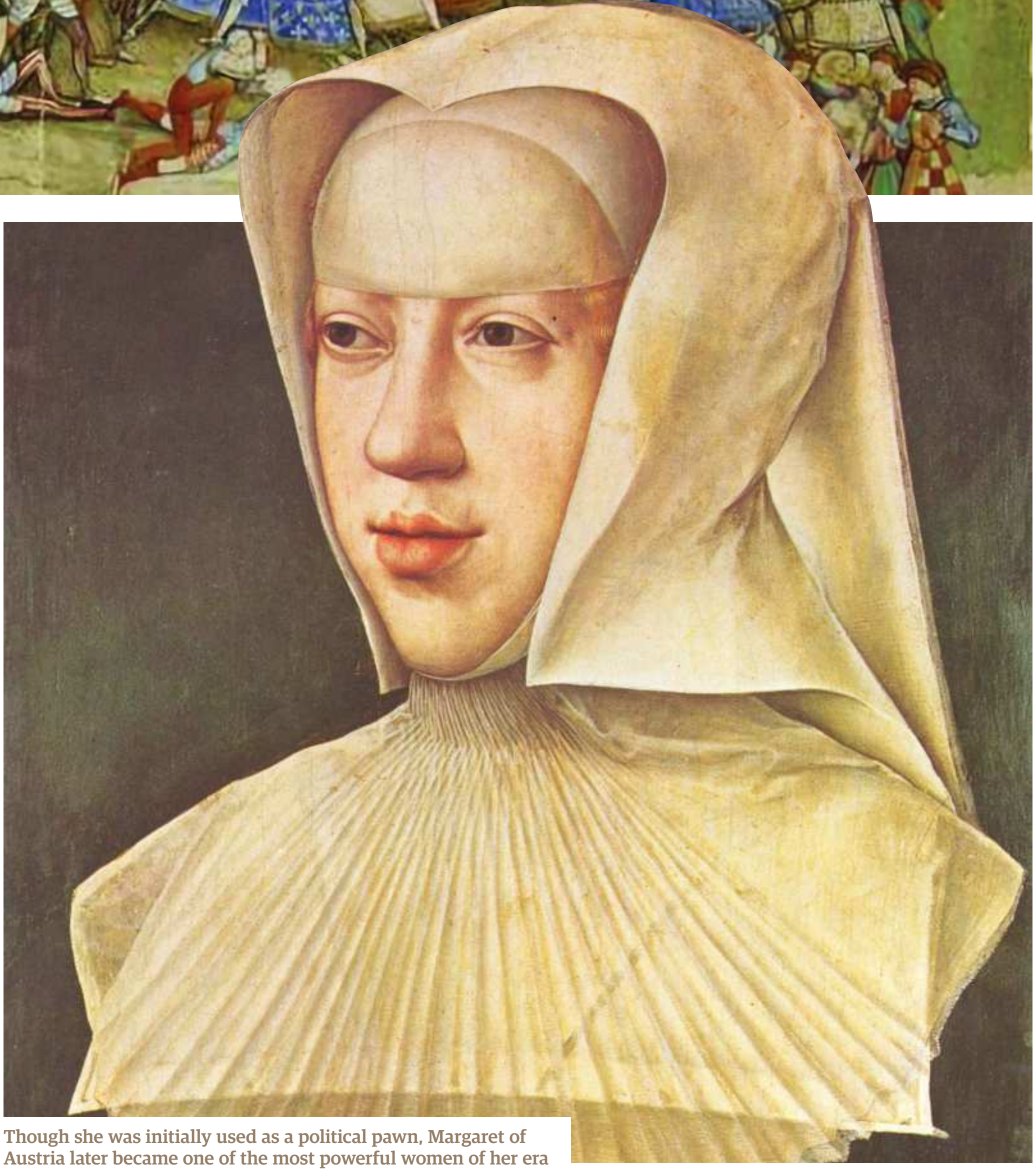
heirs determined to secure its return. As part of this, Margaret was involved personally in much of the military preparations, both in raising funds and troops. In a letter from 1511 she also assured her father that she was preparing herself "in order to march before her army". Although she suffered defeat later in that year at the siege of Venlo, her father considered that she fought "with the courage of a man and not that of a woman". The war continued throughout Margaret's time as regent.

Margaret was also a great supporter of the alliance between England and the Netherlands, meeting with Henry VIII, who was then her father's ally, at Tournai in 1513. It was a festive occasion in which Margaret received a surprising marriage proposal from Charles Brandon, Henry VIII's greatest friend, who would later secretly marry the English king's sister. He was a glamorous figure, so similar in person to Henry VIII that they were rumoured to be half-brothers. He cut a fine figure in the jousts held at Tournai, wearing a suit of armour adorned with purple velvet and decorated with silver, which was identical to Henry's own.

Brandon and Margaret enjoyed a flirtation in Tournai. Rumours soon abounded that the regent and Brandon were secretly engaged, with Margaret later indignantly denying the reports. She insisted that she had told Brandon that she considered herself "too much unhappy in husbands" and that she had no desire to ever get married again. It was, however, an embarrassing incident, with Henry VIII himself also writing to her to apologise and promise to find the source of the rumours.

Although unwilling to wed Charles Brandon, there was one English marriage in which Margaret was strongly in favour – that of her young nephew, Charles, to Mary Tudor of England. She was therefore grieved when, in 1514, the alliance between England and the Holy Roman Empire broke down, with Mary Tudor instead sent to marry the aged Louis XII of France, a man that Margaret had known in her childhood in that country.

While Charles' English match came to nothing, Margaret was also involved in arrangements for the marriages of her nieces, with Maximilian arranging for Mary of Austria to marry the Prince of Hungary in 1514 and Isabella of Austria to marry the King of Denmark later that year. Margaret was not, however, entirely happy with the husband choices, as she informed her father, who wrote to her to complain that she had given him "great astonishment" in writing that the princesses "are badly served in their marriages". Nonetheless, Margaret made the best of matters. She oversaw Isabella's betrothal ceremony herself, writing proudly to her father that "it certainly did one good to look at Madame Isabel, my niece", while she reported that "Charles showed himself such a good brother, and carried out everything, even



Though she was initially used as a political pawn, Margaret of Austria later became one of the most powerful women of her era

to the dances in which he accompanied the said lady, his sister, to perfection".

By 1515, Margaret had been regent for eight years, but it was clear Charles was growing up. Amidst increasing political intrigues in the Netherlands, there were calls for Charles to take control of his own affairs and head his own government. Maximilian agreed, allowing Charles to declare his majority on 8 January 1515 and begin his personal rule of the Netherlands.

This was a huge personal blow to Margaret, who had raised the boy from his early childhood, and politically it was devastating for her. She found herself excluded from the government of the Netherlands, appearing only at ceremonial occasions. She later wept in front of the English ambassador, Sir Richard Wingfield, when she complained of her loss of honour. On 20 August 1515 Margaret felt compelled to submit a defence of her reign to Charles and his council, in which she explained her activities as regent.

Although Margaret busied herself with domestic matters, religion and the arts, she was eager to return to a political role. Ferdinand of Aragon died on 23 January 1516, leaving Charles as king of a united Spain and making it necessary for him to travel to his new kingdoms the following year. Charles had already begun to allow Margaret greater access to power and, following his departure, she effectively became regent of the Netherlands once more.

Margaret, who had just turned 39, received a personal blow on 12 January 1519 with the death of her father. Maximilian had only been 59 years old, but that was elderly by the standards of the time, and he had remained an able politician. Although his political relationship with his daughter had sometimes been strained, the pair had been close. She took the time to compose a poem in her father's honour, although she also immediately busied herself campaigning for Charles' election as Holy Roman Emperor.

Margaret spent many of her last years wrestling with the problems of the Reformation, while also continuing to govern her homeland ably on behalf of her beloved nephew. In 1529 she was also responsible for negotiating the Treaty of Cambrai with Louise of Savoy, an old acquaintance from her childhood and the mother of Francis I of France. This peace, which was sought by Francis in the wake of his defeat by Charles in the wars in Italy, was to be Margaret's most famous achievement and was one of the final acts she carried out as regent of the Netherlands.

By the time Margaret turned 50 in January 1530, there were few in Europe who could match the length of her political career. Later that year she was cut by a shard of glass that had fallen into her slipper. Advised that her foot would have to be amputated to prevent infection, Margaret died on 1 December 1530 after taking an accidental overdose of opiates.

It was a sudden end to the life and career of the most remarkable woman of her generation.

© Getty

1552–1612

THE ALCHEMIST OF AUSTRIA

Scholar, naïve dupe, political visionary, eccentric or just plain mad? Emperor Rudolf II was, and remains, an enigma

Written by Derek Wilson

Being born into the 16th-century Habsburg dynasty carried with it great political power, territorial responsibility and, unfortunately, genetic problems. The problems were the direct result of trying to safeguard the power and the responsibility - put simply, the Habsburgs believed that one way to remain the leading European dynasty was intermarriage. They couldn't know that inbreeding over time would produce physical and mental disorders.

Rudolf was born in Vienna, Austria on 18 July 1552 to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and Maria of Spain and was a victim of this policy of deliberate consanguinity. In his mother's family, an incredible 80% of marriages were between closely related partners, including Rudolf's parents, who were both grandchildren of Joanna 'the Mad' of Castile. Did Joanna merit her moniker? It's an issue that historians have long debated but, for whatever reason, she suffered from depression or, as it was known then, melancholia. Rudolf suffered from the same condition.

His general wellbeing was not helped by an enforced sojourn in Spain from 1563 to 1571. While spending his early years in the relatively liberal atmosphere of the Austrian imperial court where his father ruled a patchwork empire of states - some of which were officially Lutheran or Calvinist - he had learned the political art of pragmatism. Rudolf's Spanish mother, however, had been reared in the fanatically Catholic atmosphere of the court governed by her father, Emperor Charles V, and her brother, Philip II. It was she who insisted that Rudolf complete his education under the stiffly formal and pious Spanish regime.

By the time he returned home to Austria, the heir to the Holy Roman Empire was quiet, introverted and aloof, more interested in pursuing his own hobbies than in following affairs of state. It would be hardly surprising that the ruler-in-waiting would not relish getting to grips with the complexities of politico-religious issues to which his tolerant father and fanatical mother had taken such opposing attitudes.

Rudolf's hobbies were numerous. He embraced the Renaissance concept of l'uomo universale, the idea that to be fully human one should acquire as much knowledge and experience as possible, and his education was thorough. He could speak all the languages necessary to rule his multilingual empire and to converse with ambassadors. He also had an informed understanding of art, which he may well have picked up from his uncle, Philip II, who owned an extensive collection.

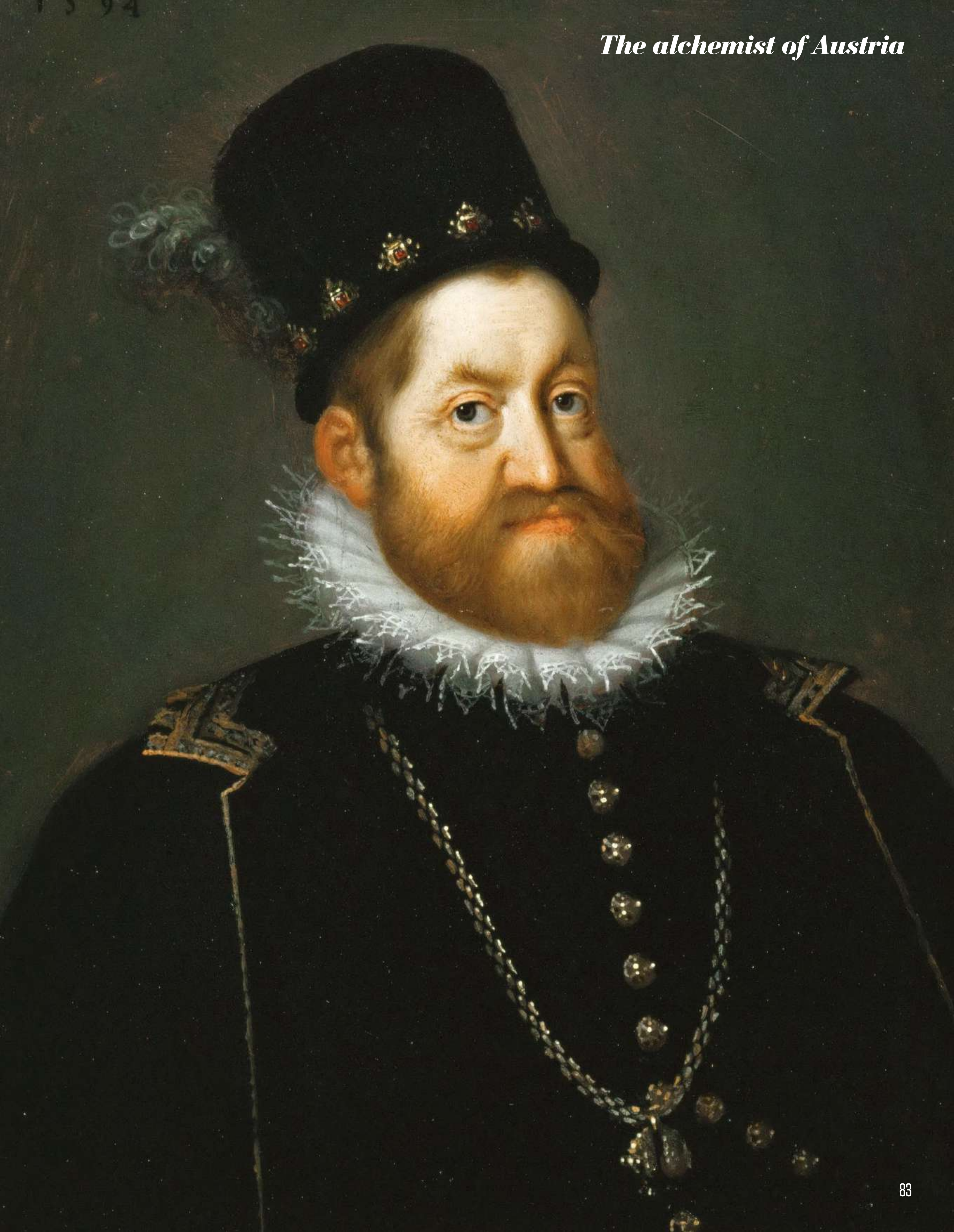
In an age when scholars were pursuing 'scientia', or knowledge, in numerous ways, it must have

RUDOLF II

1552-1612

Brief Bio

Destined to inherit the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, Rudolf also became King of Hungary and Croatia from 1572 to 1608, King of Bohemia from 1575 to 1611, and King of Germany from 1575 until his death in 1612.


1594

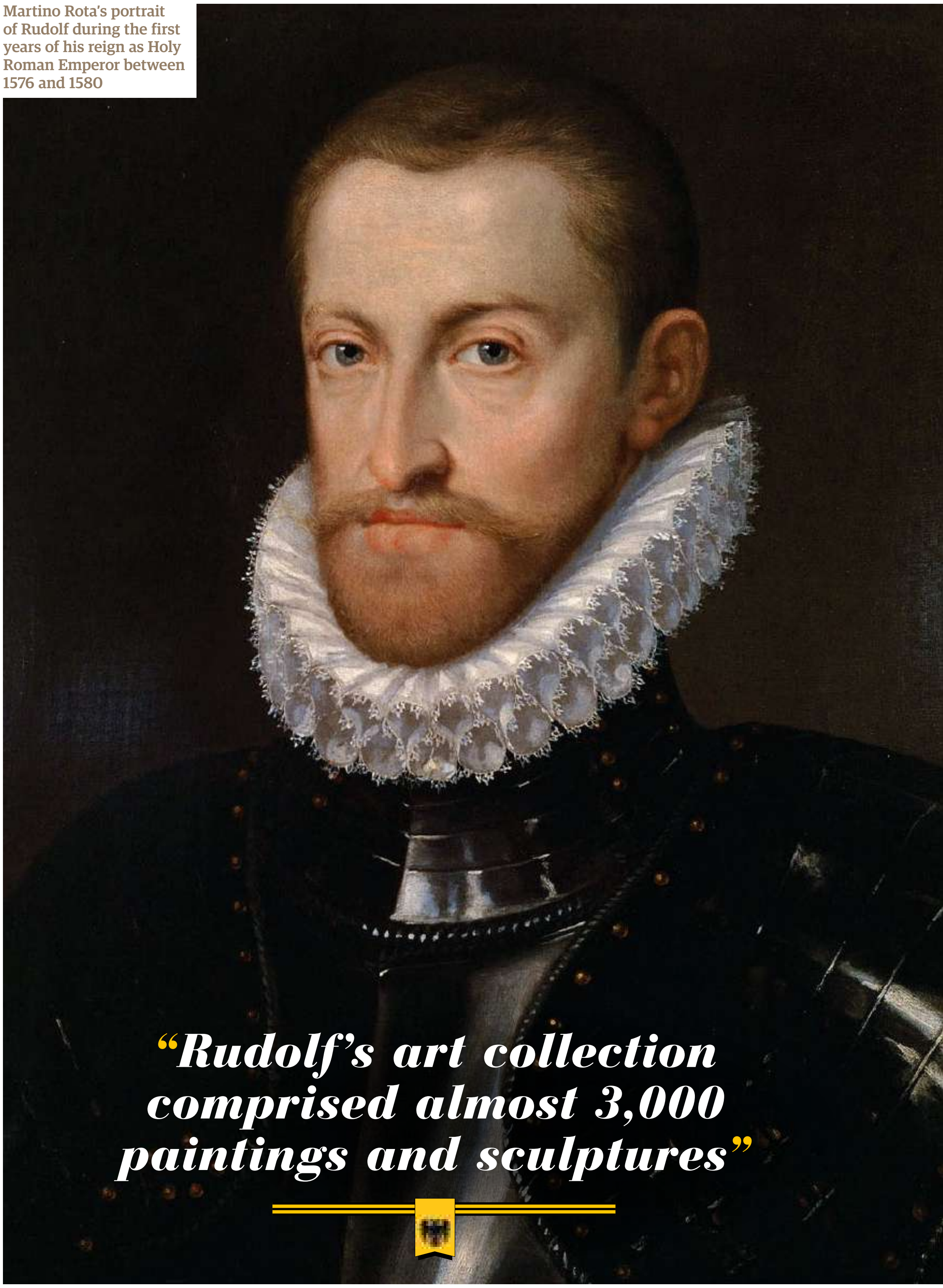
seemed to him that quarrels between Catholics and Lutherans were futile in comparison. In Rudolf's lifetime, Friar Giordano Bruno was burned to death in Rome for maintaining that the universe was infinite and for conjuring spirits; the first astronomical telescopes were developed; King James VI of Scotland wrote a manual on witchcraft; Dr John Dee, the English magus, was touring foreign courts conducting alchemical experiments; and Galileo and his opponents were heatedly debating heliocentric theory. Man's widening exploration of his environment enthralled the young emperor-to-be.

Rudolf took the throne in 1576 and was immediately plunged into the maelstrom of European politics. Within days of his coronation, news arrived of the 'Spanish Fury' – Philip II's response to the resistance to his rule by 'heretical' subjects in Antwerp. Six thousand citizens were slaughtered and all prospects of ending hostilities to Habsburg rule in the Netherlands were set at naught. Although this atrocity didn't directly involve the regime in Vienna, it did set off reverberations throughout Rudolf's dominions.

The following year, sky-watchers were alarmed by the appearance of a great comet, hailed by preachers as a harbinger of doom. Sure enough, Vienna was ravaged by an earthquake and a virulent outbreak of the plague. The emperor tried to avert political disaster with a policy of toleration towards his Protestant subjects, but decades of violence and mistrust undermined all attempts at compromise and he fell back on repression.

It is difficult to discern any consistency in Rudolf's policies or his own lifestyle. He paid scant attention to Catholic dogma and rituals yet tried to remain on good terms with Rome. He never married but had a string of mistresses and, according to rumour, indulged in homosexual relationships. The nitty-gritty of government held no appeal for him and his attempts to cope brought on a mental and physical breakdown. The only bright spot in his life was the departure of his devout mother for Spain in 1582, where she entered a nunnery.

The following year, Rudolf fled from the pressures of Vienna and established his court at Prague Castle. It was there that he became what painter and historian Karel van Mander called "the greatest art patron in the world at the present time".


Martino Rota's portrait of Rudolf during the first years of his reign as Holy Roman Emperor between 1576 and 1580

> "Rudolf's art collection comprised almost 3,000 paintings and sculptures"

The connoisseur was a relatively new phenomenon involving the patronage of artists, musicians and scientists combined with scholarly curiosity. Wealthy collectors no longer regarded artworks as mere objects with which they could adorn their palaces. The Austrian Habsburgs produced two members of this new breed of art lover – Rudolf and his uncle and close contemporary, Archduke Ferdinand II. It was the latter who coined the term 'wunderkammer', the room of marvels. According to history professor Joyce Youings, their collections "were guided by the desire to dazzle and astonish the viewer with the most extraordinary examples of artifice, whether created by the sublime design of artisans or the mysterious workings of nature. Pieces of gold and silversmith work, exquisitely wrought and set with an abundance of precious stones, were juxtaposed with natural phenomena such as unicorn horns (actually narwhal tusks), exotic sea shells, sinuous pieces of coral (considered to be a kind of divine sculpture) and sometimes dubious freaks of nature. Musical and scientific instruments, coins and medals, books and codices, arms and armour and automata all had a place in this ambitious attempt to recreate the infinite variety of the universe within the compass of a single collection."

Rudolf's art collection comprised almost 3,000 paintings and sculptures, most of which were on view to the public. Such assemblages of 'marvels' were the forerunners of the great galleries and museums of later ages.

Over the years, Prague Castle received several strange visitors. Today, we make simple distinctions

Hermeticism

Rudolf was a keen follower of one particular esoteric tradition

In all probability, there was no philosophical basis for Rudolf's worldview. He was a dabbler, an angler in the pool of ideas, an encourager of avant-garde thinkers who loved to have scholars and artists around him opening windows on esoteric and even forbidden knowledge. Of all the belief systems that appealed to him, none was more engaging than Renaissance hermeticism.

The schema, supposedly set down in the dawn of time by Hermes Trismegistus, predated the world religions of Rudolf's day and offered a 'root theology' (prisca theologia) purer and more comprehensive than Judaism, Islam or the competing brands of Christianity. It proposed a heliocentric view of the universe where man was a microcosm of the cosmos and the cosmos was a macrocosm of man. By embracing Trismegistus' Corpus Hermeticum, the adept could gain access to divine powers, converse with spirits, grasp the meanings behind terrestrial events set out in the heavens and enjoy harmony with the basic elements of all created matter.

Astrology and alchemy were doorways through which Rudolf sought to pass, giving access to profoundly superior wisdom. It's small wonder that the emperor shunned church rituals and was contemptuous of disputes between Catholics and Protestants.

RVDOLPHVS.II.D:G.RO.IM:SEM.AV.GER.HV:BO.REX
1604

ABOVE A coin depicting the likeness of Rudolf II from 1604

TOP A 17th-century medal depicting Rudolf II surrounded by Peace, War and the electors

between science and superstition, but that wasn't possible in Rudolf's day, where scholars eagerly studied both alchemy and astrology. As we now know, these were dead ends, but it would be many years before these areas of study were abandoned - although, by then, alchemy and astrology had produced valuable by-products.

The first celebrity magus to be collected by Rudolf was John Dee, a talented mathematician who had contributed to important developments in navigation and had been the official astrologer to Elizabeth I of England. His wide-ranging interests included Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah. In 1583, Dee travelled the continent to spread his vision of superior (mystical) knowledge. A contemporary reported:

"A learned and renowned Englishman whose name was Doctor Dee came to Prague to see the Emperor Rudolf II and was at first well received by him; he predicted that a miraculous reformation would presently come about in the Christian world and would prove the ruin not only of the city of Constantinople but of Rome also."

But it was Dee's companion who made a bigger impression on the emperor. Edward Kelley was a highly plausible charlatan who had convinced Dee that he was a 'scryer', a conjuror of spirits. The two men eventually fell out when Kelley tried to persuade his colleague that his angelic contacts were instructing them to swap wives.

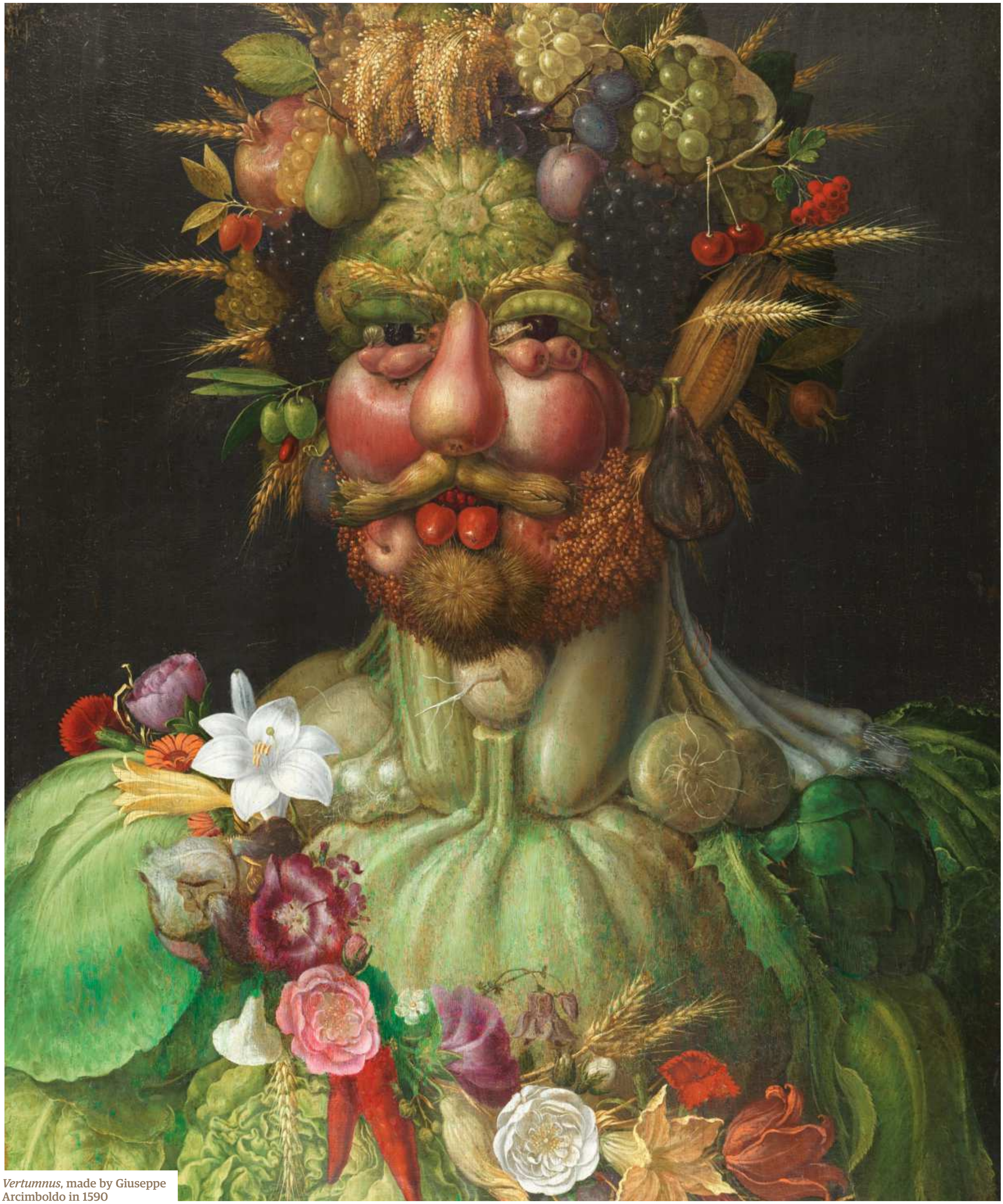
Dee returned home, but Kelley continued his profitable career of conning clients with his magical mumbo-jumbo. He made a deep impression on the emperor with his audacious claim to be able to turn base metal into gold and Rudolf waited with mounting impatience for him to prove his boast, eventually locking him in a castle with instructions to bring his experiments to fruition.

It was at about the same time that Rudolf welcomed a more impressive protégé, Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, to Prague. This wealthy scholar had devoted years to astronomical research and measurement and he kept an army of workers constantly employed in making instruments capable of charting the movements of heavenly bodies. He developed his own theory of the relative movements of Earth and the sun, but his motivation was not the pursuit of 'pure' science - he was an astrologer and believed that accurate measurement was the key to the correct casting of horoscopes.

This arrogant and eccentric aristocrat-scholar was internationally famous, and when he fell out with his patron, Christian IV of Denmark, in 1597, Rudolf was quick to snap him up. He provided the Dane with a castle and everything he needed to continue his work - but Rudolf was no more fortunate than he had been with Kelley. Brahe died in 1601 of a urinary infection - or did he? In the highly charged atmosphere of rivalry, the rumour soon spread that he had been murdered on the orders of King Christian.

Such stories were readily believed because of the bizarre lifestyle that prevailed in the exotic world of scholars and patrons who refused to be constrained by convention. Brahe kept a court jester who allegedly possessed psychic powers. As for Rudolf, as well as his uninhibited sex life, he allowed a tiger and a lion to roam freely his castle and, consequently, frequently had to compensate his servants and guests for injuries received at their claws.

The emperor continued to be subject to unaccountable mood swings and violent outbursts



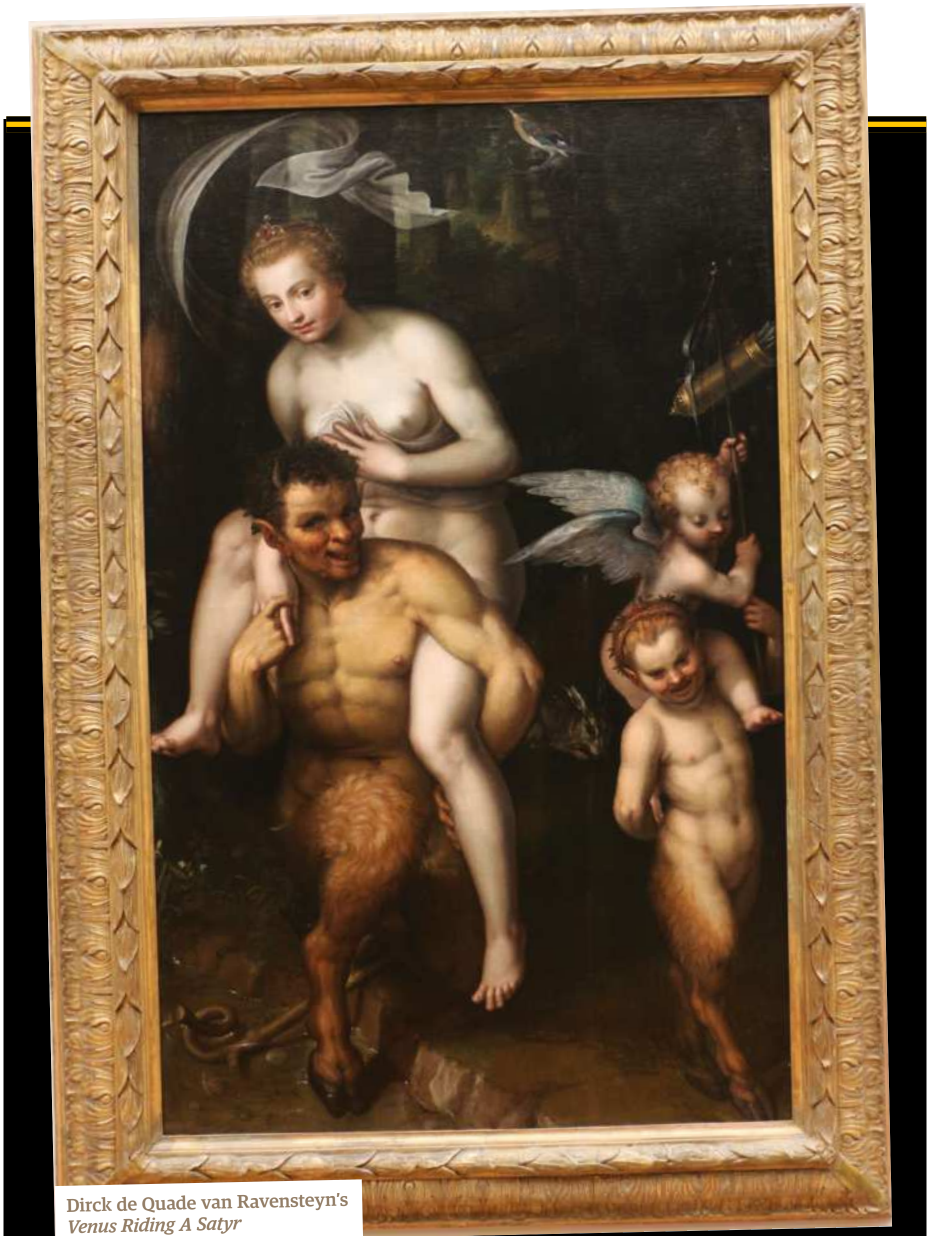
Vertumnus, made by Giuseppe Arcimboldo in 1590 of temper. This did not make it easy for him to cope with the wide-ranging political responsibilities that went with his position. While unable to get his head around the differences dividing Catholics and Protestants, he believed that accord could be achieved by imperial diktat. The instability of his regime was demonstrated when he granted significant concessions to the Protestant princes of Bohemia in 1600, only to follow this two years later with military intervention designed to bring them to heel. His incompetence inclined several of Rudolf's officials to look increasingly to his younger brother, Matthias, for whom Rudolf felt a reciprocated loathing.

> **"Artists and dealers converged on Prague, hoping to make sales or acquire patronage"**

Meanwhile, the collections continued to grow. As Rudolf's reputation as a supporter of the arts spread, artists and dealers converged on Prague, hoping to make sales or acquire patronage. The emperor's passion was also of interest to foreign rulers, civic officers and their diplomats. After all, what better way to secure an audience with the reclusive emperor than by presenting him with an exotic gift? Gifts came to Prague by the crateload – an ivory altar from the elector palatine, a Greek sarcophagus from a member of the Fugger banking family, and Dürer's much-prized depiction of the Trinity offered by the citizens of Nuremberg.

For several years, the major domo overseeing the cultural life of Rudolf's court was the Milanese artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo, surely the most outrageously original painter of the age. His speciality was composing portraits made up of other objects. His depiction of Rudolf as Vertumnus, Roman god of the seasons, was compiled from fruit, flowers and vegetables. This was not just an exercise in the bizarre – like much late Renaissance art, it contained allusions that the initiated would readily recognise. Arcimboldo was affirming that Rudolf was the representative of the eternal empire, as permanent as the cycle of the seasons.

More significantly, Vertumnus, along with the Roman god Hermes or his Greek equivalent, Mercury, was closely associated with alchemy and communication with spirits. Arcimboldo's primary function was to glorify the emperor.



Dirck de Quade van Ravensteyn's *Venus Riding A Satyr*

Dirck de Quade van Ravesteyn

As a patron of the arts, Rudolf certainly had his favourite painters. One Dutchman was the pick of the bunch

Rudolf's collection of artworks included masterpieces by many of the leading artists of the Renaissance. As well as the great Italians such as Caravaggio, Veronese, Titian and Tintoretto, he acquired pieces by leaders of the northern Renaissance – Bosch, van Eyck, Bruegel, Holbein and Dürer. But his acquisitions often owed more to the emperor's 'basic' tastes than to aesthetic appreciation.

One of his favourite court painters was Dirck de Quade van Ravesteyn, of whom little is now known. He came from a family of painters in the Hague but joined Rudolf's entourage early on and remained a fixture there until the emperor's death. De Quade created numerous works, largely of allegorical subjects, but all featuring nubile nudes, such as *Venus Riding A Satyr*, above. In other paintings the artist brought together very 'fleshy' ladies with flattering portraits of the emperor. Presumably Rudolf rated them as highly as works by the great Renaissance masters.

There is no doubting Rudolf's genuine appreciation of his artists' work and he was lavish in his rewards. De Quade not only enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle in Prague, he also became a moneylender on quite a large scale. After 1612, he actually lent money to the emperor Matthias. In 1595, Rudolf extended the privileges of the Prague painters' guild, decreeing that no one henceforth should be allowed to refer to art as a mere 'handicraft'.

Visitors to the court described how Rudolf would spend time in de Quade's studio to watch him at work and discuss with him the intricacies of composition. It was also said that he sat for hours on end gazing at the Dutchman's exuberant painted nudes. Quite what was going through the patron's mind, of course, we do not know.

"Rudolf's grand collection suffered dust and decay"

OPPOSITE Melancholia, an engraving by Albrecht Dürer in 1514

BELOW A clockwork-driven globe that was made for Rudolf II's wunderkammer. An internal mechanism powered the celestial globe's rotation

In this capacity, he designed costumes, masque scenery and carnival floats of monumental extravagance. Some cavalcades could last for several days.

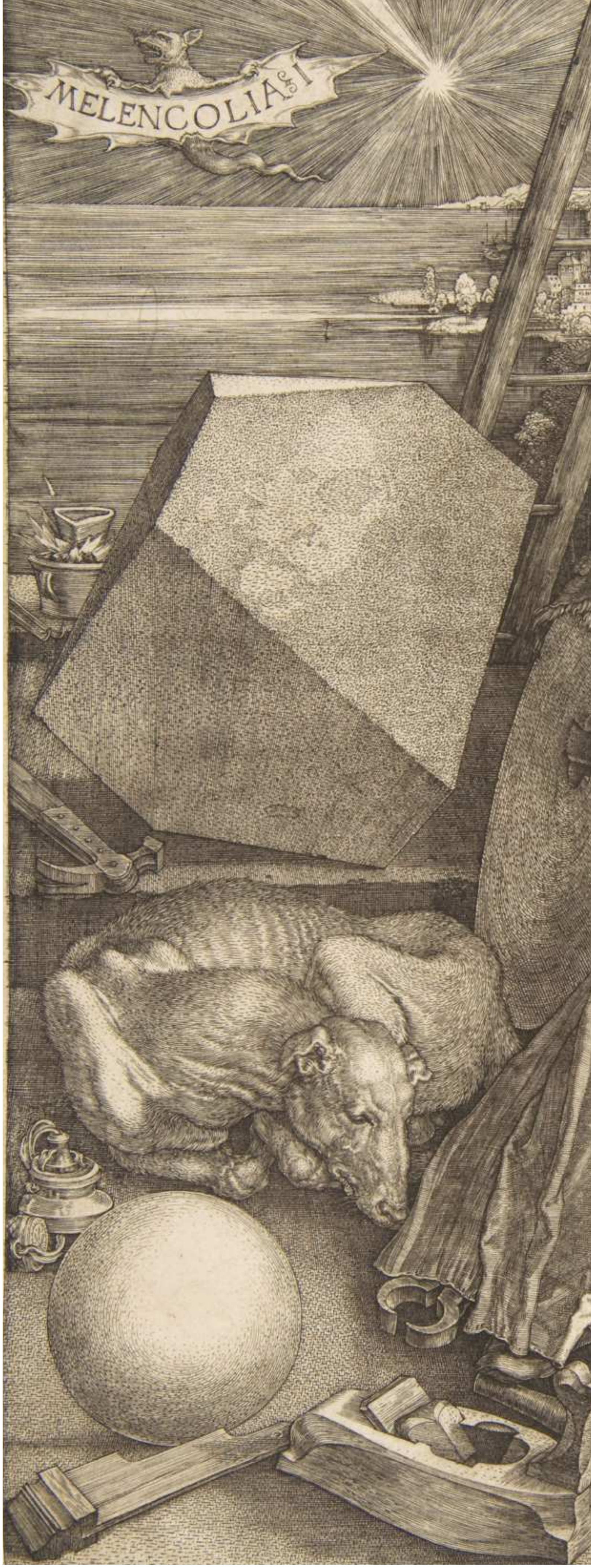
One obvious feature that stands out from the collection of paintings commissioned by, or presented to, Rudolf is their prurience. Contemporary Scottish novelist John Barclay depicted the aged emperor shuffling round his castle, forever feasting his eyes on his "prostitute paintings". Rudolf's favourite artists well understood the taste of their voluptuarian master and kept him supplied with allegorical paintings of well-proportioned goddesses whose forms bordered on the erotic.

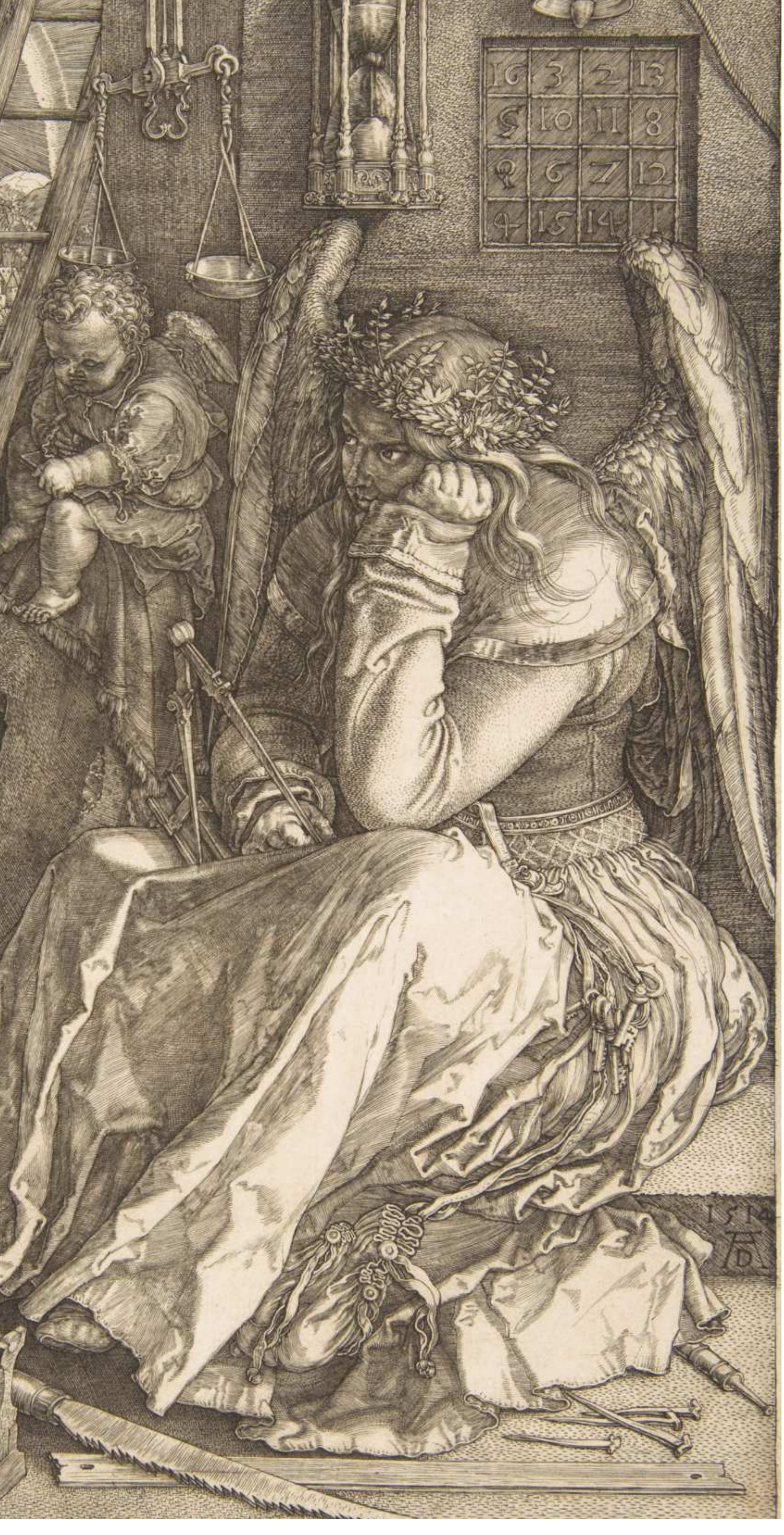
But not all acquisitions were received with enthusiasm. One masterpiece that entered the collection was Bruegel the Elder's *Massacre Of The Innocents*. It purported to depict King Herod's slaughter of all children under the age of two in order to rid his realm of a rival king, Jesus. The nationalistic artist transferred the scene to Flanders and showed the atrocity being perpetrated by Spanish soldiers. Such anti-Habsburg propaganda was obviously an embarrassment and all the incidents of murder were painted over, presumably on Rudolf's orders.

So massive and dominated by the emperor's taste was the Prague collection that it came to be recognised as a distinct 'school' – Rudolfine Mannerism. Mannerism was an aspect of late Renaissance art that had replaced naturalism with exaggerated forms and colours, and Rudolf's artists took it as far as it could go.

The emperor's political fortunes were also approaching the end of the road. The problems facing the empire would have taxed the resources of any dedicated ruler who spent hours at his desk. As well as the conflicting demands of Catholic and Protestant subjects and Turkish incursions along the eastern border, Rudolf had to face continual intrigue from Matthias, egged on by the pope.

Thanks to the emperor's dogged resistance to marriage, his only legitimate heir was his younger brother, who was impatient to step up to the throne. Rudolf made matters easier for him by embarking on a disastrous war against the Ottomans in 1593, a conflict lasting 13 years and taking a terrible toll on lives. By now, the emperor's physical





and mental health was collapsing. His foul moods and bouts of ill temper were more frequent. He sacked and reinstalled councillors on a whim and increasingly only trusted his artists and fellow aficionados of the occult.

"...the Emperor has been bewitched and is in league with the devil. I have been shown the chair in which His Majesty sits when holding conversations with the Prince of Darkness himself. I have seen the little bell His Majesty uses whenever he wishes to summon the spirits of the departed..."

Such were the rumours circulating about the aged emperor, and it is not difficult to see why they were given credence. Rudolf's tortured mind produced a morbid fear of Catholic worship and even drove him to smash a stained-glass window and try to stab himself with a shard. Matthias needed no further proof of the need for a change of regime. In 1611, he persuaded the imperial council to demand Rudolf's abdication. Within months, the 'Wizard Emperor' was dead.

Rudolf's grand collection suffered dust and decay. His successors sold off most of his artworks, while an invading army looted others during the devastating Thirty Years' War. Advocates of the fashionable Baroque movement rejected Mannerism, and science abandoned alchemy and the astrological visions that had so entranced the emperor. His dream of Catholic-Protestant rapprochement proved as evanescent as his speculations about a hermetic world religion. Was there, then, nothing to show for the tragicomedy of Rudolf II's life?

He deserves to be remembered as the late Renaissance patron par excellence. Without the resources, encouragement and belief of wealthy backers, the arts and sciences would certainly have advanced more slowly. In 1600, Johannes Kepler, a 29-year-old scholar from Graz, arrived in Prague to take up the post of assistant to Tycho Brahe. After the Dane's sudden death the following year, Kepler became Rudolf's court mathematician and astrologer, remaining in Prague until the emperor's death in 1612.

Using the encyclopaedic information on stellar movements compiled by Brahe, Kepler published the Rudolphine Tables in 1627, which charted the courses of almost 2,000 heavenly bodies and related them to the heliocentric theory that had, by then, become accepted as the basis of understanding about the solar system.

But that was only one aspect of Kepler's remarkable output. His works, running in modern translation to 22 substantial volumes, cover astronomy, geometry, optics, physics and logarithms. He described the orbit of Jupiter and the structure of snowflakes. He even wrote a story about a voyage to the moon – the first sci-fi novel. If Rudolf II had done nothing more than make possible the development of this scientific genius, he would have justified his existence.

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DEATH & DECLINE

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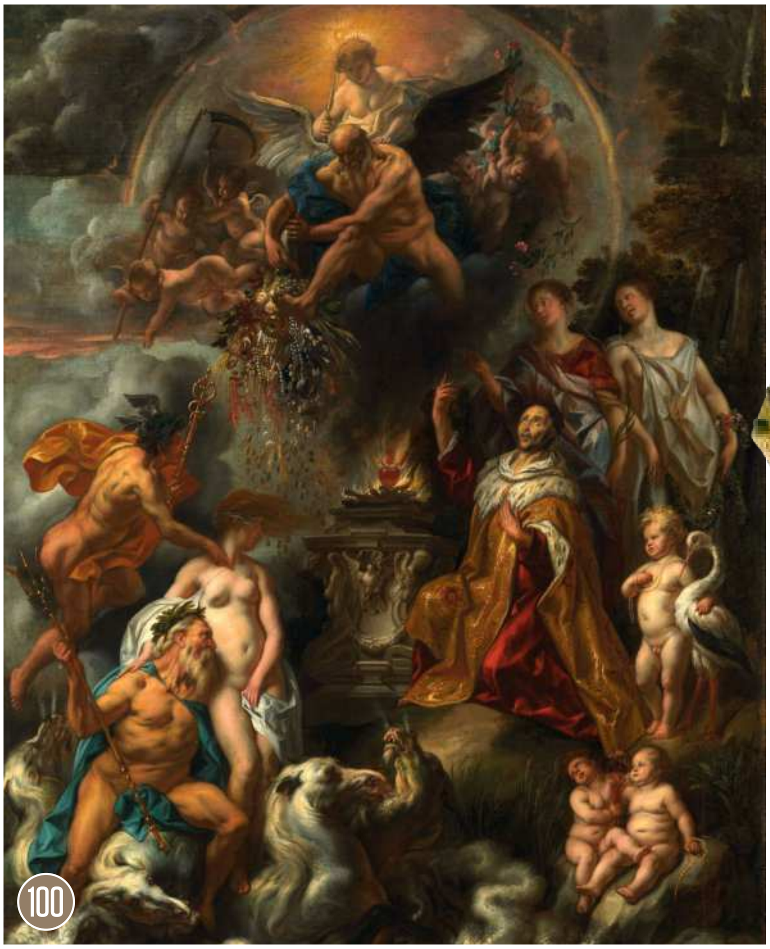

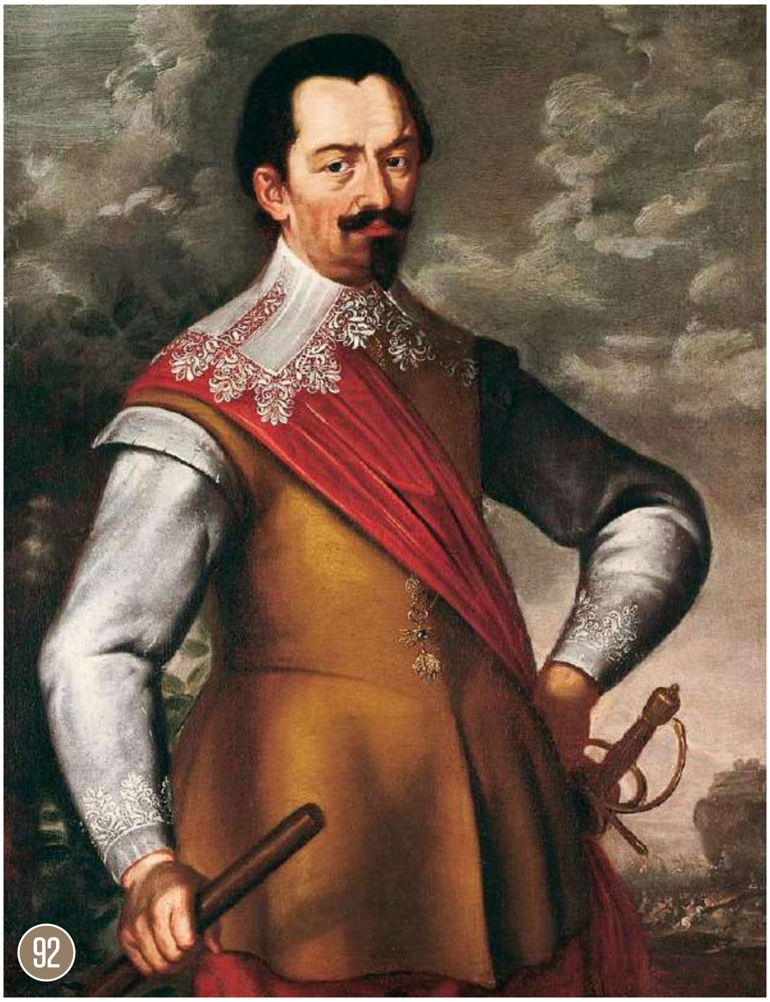

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1618–1648

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The death throes of the Holy Roman Emperor's authority initiated the ultimate battle for religious freedom, ensnaring Europe and costing millions of lives

Written by James Horton

At the beginning of the 17th century Europe was poised for war. The Kingdom of Spain was intent on conquering the northern Netherlands, and France was determined to stop it. Both Spain and the Holy Roman Empire - which primarily covered modern-day Germany - were being ruled by members of the formidable House of Habsburg. The Kingdom of France was ruled by a rival dynasty and found itself sandwiched between Habsburg Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. France watched Spain's army with a suspicious eye, resolving to stop it from advancing on the Netherlands and gaining yet more territory near France's own border.

As well as the territorial struggles between kingdoms, religiosity added another layer of friction to the situation in Europe. Since the Reformation in 1517, Protestantism and its two major sub-religions, Lutheranism and Calvinism, had spread throughout the continent. The surge of Protestants had fractured relationships both between countries and within their own borders. Italy, Spain, France, Poland, Hungary and others maintained traditional Catholicism as their state religion. Meanwhile, England, Denmark, Sweden and the northern Netherlands had converted to Protestantism. Yet within national borders the semi-independent regions practised conflicting Christian religions to that of the state.

Nowhere was this so hotly contested than in the Holy Roman Empire. The six German princes who served and elected the emperor (alongside the Elector of Bohemia) were evenly divided between Catholicism and Protestantism. In fact, the divisions had grown so deep that the princes had split into opposing forces named the Protestant Union and the Catholic League. The reigning Emperor Matthias and his chosen successor, Archduke Ferdinand II, did not appreciate the growing threat of the Protestants and plotted to oppress their religious freedoms. So while Europe was watching France, Spain and the Netherlands nervously, expectant of an impending war, they were caught by surprise when conflict broke out not to the west but in Prague, the violence sparked by an angry mob hurling some imperial advisors out of a window in an event that became known as the Defenestration of Prague.

As Matthias' successor, Ferdinand was set to inherit the Kingdom of Bohemia, which sat roughly on the modern Czech Republic-Slovakia border. Aware of Ferdinand's radical Catholic policies, the population - which included a mixture of Catholics and Protestants - sought assurances in 1618 that they should be granted the right to continue

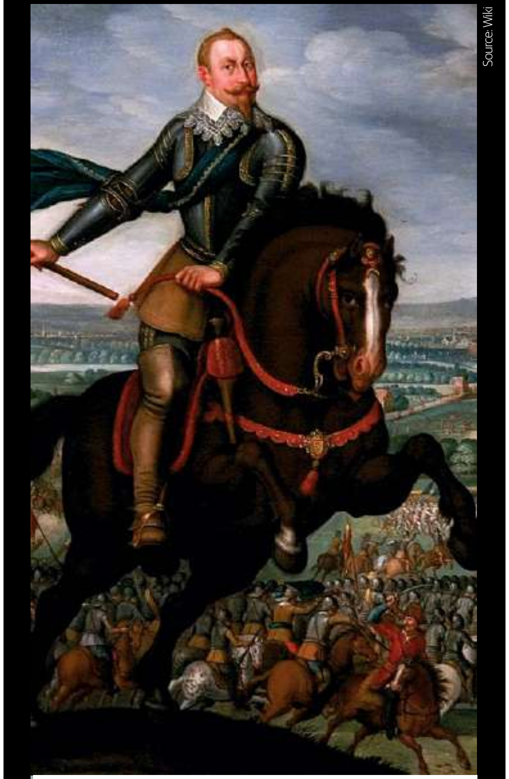
Source: Getty

Gustavus Adolphus

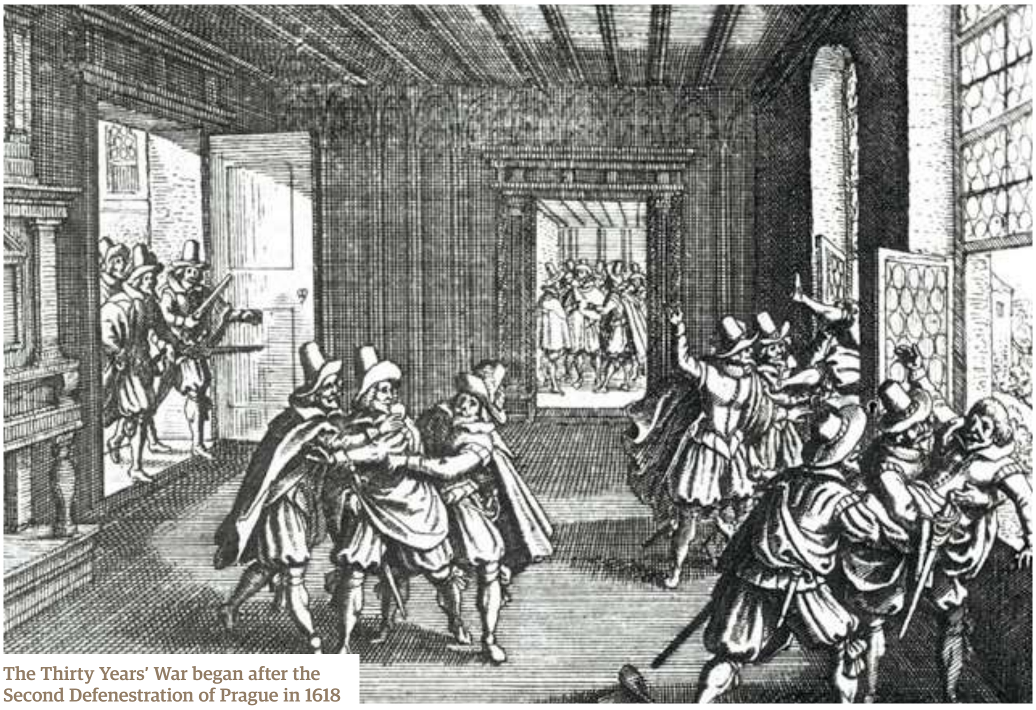
The Swedish king earned the title of Father of Modern Warfare for his military innovations and exploits

Gustav II Adolf – known to history as Gustavus Adolphus – ascended to the Swedish throne in 1611. Gustavus inherited a poor country and an even poorer army, but he swiftly morphed his peasant farmer conscripts into one of Europe's most elite fighting forces. Aware that his cavalry was a weakness, he reorganised his army to maximise the firepower of his infantry and artillery. He packed his frontline full of musketeers and drilled them to alternate their volleys for maximum firing efficiency. Each infantry regiment was additionally equipped with a small, mobile artillery battery that could be moved with the men across the battlefield as required. Gustavus also placed musketeers among his cavalry ranks, where they'd drive off enemy charges with point-blank volleys.

Adolphus hardened his professional army in the Polish-Swedish war of 1626-1629 and received border security and an economic boon from the resulting peace treaty. This left him well prepared to enter the Thirty Years' War with Emperor Ferdinand and the Catholic League, and he used his veteran troops and innovative tactics to reverse the fortunes of the Protestant cause in Germany. After winning multiple major battles, he met his death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632 while fighting on the frontline with his men. Legend says that when an enemy soldier placed a firearm to the wounded king's temple and asked him his name, he accepted his fate with the final words, "I was the King of Sweden."


Source: Wiki

The Swedish success at the Battle of Breitenfeld breathed new life into the Protestant cause


Source: Wiki

The Thirty Years' War began after the Second Defenestration of Prague in 1618

> "The Spanish wasted little time in establishing their foothold in Frederick's Palatinate region"

practising whichever religion they saw fit. Their impending new king and emperor-elect agreed to sign the Letter of Majesty confirming this right, which it was hoped would assuage the masses and prevent rioting.

The imperial governors soon proved themselves disingenuous, however, at first preventing Bohemian villagers from erecting Protestant churches and then imprisoning them for attempting to do so. The populace was quickly united in its dismay and resolved to cast off the yolk of the House of Habsburg.

The angry citizenry fell on the capital of Prague, and an overly eager contingent decided that murdering Matthias' agents was the best way to send their message to the emperor. They ascended the stairway to their offices and tossed their victims kicking and screaming out of the window. Despite falling around 20 metres, all three men survived, although whether their salvation was owed to divine intervention (as the Catholics later jubilantly claimed) or their fortuitous landing in soft dung is lost to history. Either way the men retreated, leaving the Protestants to seize power and declare their independence in the following days. The rebellion had begun.

What came next would prove pivotal for the future of Europe. Alone and without leadership, Bohemia stood little chance of maintaining its freedom, so it made efforts to woo Protestant lords into taking the kingship. The Elector Palatine and German Prince Frederick V was one such man. As a Protestant he was sympathetic to the Bohemians' plight and was no supporter of the Catholic emperor-elect Ferdinand. Frederick decided to accept the offer and made for Prague towards the end of 1619, just after Emperor Matthias had finally succumbed to illness.

Frederick's court had hoped that with him championing the Protestant cause in the face of Ferdinand's impending coronation, the other European Protestant leaders would heed his rallying cry. Disappointingly, the other nations initially offered very little support, and even the German Protestant Union met his pleas with reluctance. But the new king was not alone. A local Bohemian leader named Thurn had conscripted men and raised an army; the prince Bethlen Gábor of Transylvania would soon pledge his support; and the Duke of Savoy offered to divide the costs of equipping a professional mercenary army. This new force was placed under the command of Ernst von Mansfeld, who wasted little time in successfully besieging Pilsen on behalf of Frederick.

As had been planned, Archduke Ferdinand was elected emperor on 28 August 1619, and one of his first acts upon his ascension was to award the leader of the Catholic League – the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian – a significant sum and Frederick's stripped electoral title to lead an invasion of Bohemia on his behalf. Meanwhile, the Spanish wasted little time in establishing their foothold in Frederick's abandoned Palatinate region. Their army invaded in a surprise attack, and before long they had besieged Mainz and established themselves in the crucial territory, ready to invade the Protestant Netherlands at any moment.

Maximilian's forces, under the command of one Count Tilly, entered Bohemia on 26 September 1620. Ernst von Mansfeld, whose troops had not been paid by Frederick for some time, were reluctant to march to their employer's aid and instead waited patiently at Pilsen for a new contract. This left Thurn's forces, reinforced by contingents of Hungarians, to face Count Tilly's and the imperial forces at White Hill on 8 November just outside the Bohemian capital of Prague. The conscripted Bohemians proved no match for their imperial counterparts and rapidly dissolved after seeing their mounted vanguard retreat. In the wake of his defeat Frederick fled the capital that night. Maximilian occupied Prague and promptly sent word of his victory to the emperor.

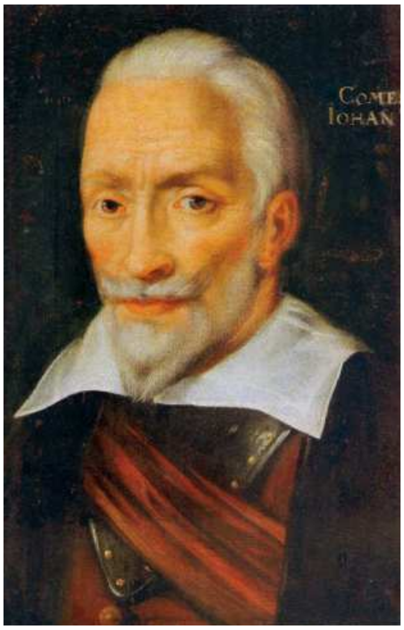
Frederick's coup may have been unsuccessful, but his fateful decision to abandon the Palatinate had opened the door to the House of Habsburg's broad ambition to invade the Netherlands. The exiled king also helped to prolong the war by refusing to renounce his claim on Bohemia. He managed to inspire new followers to raise forces on his behalf, but these were defeated by Count Tilly before they could merge into a credible threat.

Although Maximilian's army under Tilly was proving invaluable for Emperor Ferdinand, he was unhappy at being so reliant on the Catholic League. Fortunately for him, a man named Albrecht von Wallenstein offered a way out of his current predicament. Wallenstein was a minor noble who had amassed significant wealth through marriage to a wealthy widow, a woman who had left her fortune to him upon her death. But he had also garnered acclaim as a commander, and Ferdinand requested that he raise and lead an army in his name. Wallenstein accepted his offer and wasted little time in first cutting off and then defeating Mansfeld at Dessau Bridge (today located in eastern Germany) before sending the commander fleeing south. The now old and fatigued general succumbed to illness in the following weeks, ending the hopes of Frederick's forces in the field.

Pouring fuel onto an already raging fire, Denmark had decided to join the war in 1625 under King Christian IV. The Danish monarch feared that his rival Sweden would take up the Protestant fight and eventually claim dominion over the entire Balkan Sea, so he determined to beat them to it. While Wallenstein was chasing Mansfeld, Christian's forces were engaged in a cat-and-mouse chase with Tilly. The King of Denmark found himself outmanoeuvred by the

Source: Wiki

These crosses in Prague's Old Town Square represent the 27 rebellious ringleaders executed by Ferdinand's forces after the city was retaken



Source: Wiki

A talented general who won many battles, Tilly's legacy was tarnished by the Sack of Magdeburg

Source: Alamy

Matthias' governors miraculously survived the fall of 20 metres from the top window

Bavarian commander and was forced to give battle as he attempted a retreat. The Danish forces had more cannons than their adversaries but failed to make good use of them, and after the infantry made contact, Tilly's cavalry managed to outflank Christian's men on both sides, obliterating them in a pincer movement.

Christian fled northward with his shattered army as Wallenstein returned triumphant from harrying Mansfeld. He joined forces with Tilly but refused to play the role of his subordinate. The two Catholic armies moved in pursuit, entered the northern Danish-held duchy of Holstein and overran it. Wallenstein was awarded the title of Duke of Mecklenburg for his trouble, much to Tilly and Maximilian's chagrin.

Nearly a decade after the Thirty Years' War had begun, the Protestants had yet to win any major encounters. But the tide was soon to change. Wallenstein had his eyes set on the port town of Stralsund (in northeast Germany), which he set to besieging in July 1628. Stralsund was well guarded by a force of 5,000 mercenaries, levies and citizens and reinforced by Sweden during the siege, marking the kingdom's entry into the war. The weather also conspired against Wallenstein, the arrival of heavy rains washing away his dreams of seizing the city, his men unable to launch an effective assault in the deluge.

Sweden's entry into the maelstrom came at a fortunate time for the Protestants, as Christian and his 6,000 troops were about to be beaten once again, this time by Wallenstein. Upon his defeat the Danish king was forced to sign the lenient Peace of Lübeck, which left him with all his titles provided that he remained neutral for the rest of the war.

With the Catholic forces riding high, Emperor Ferdinand decided that 1629 was an excellent time to enact the Edict of Restitution. This text was an aggressive move against Protestants within the empire, as it forbade them from governing over Catholic lands. The Protestant German princes were disgusted by this affront to liberty. They called for a diet to discuss the edict, which was held in Regensburg in 1630. Ferdinand was adamant that the edict remain but he paid for it dearly, as the princes demanded that Wallenstein be stripped of his command and the imperial army be mostly dissolved. Such was Ferdinand's resolve on restricting religious freedoms that he agreed to these draconian terms.

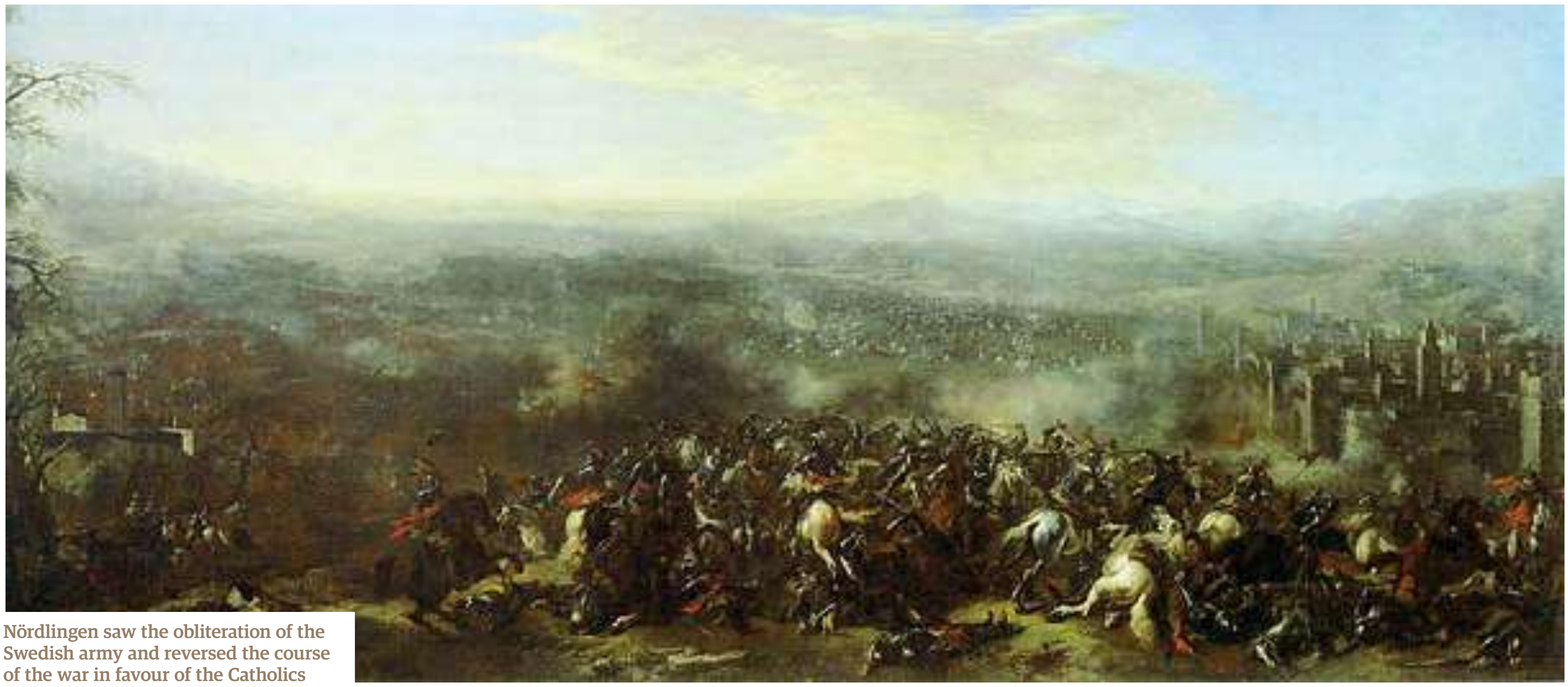
The Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus had political as well as religious motives to enter the war. He was a Protestant, but more pressingly he feared that the House of Habsburg would help the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth push their claim on the Swedish throne. He resolved to claim the initiative and swiftly established a foothold on the German side of the Balkans, signing the Treaty of Stettin at the end of summer 1630 to gain formal control of Pomerania, which bordered the sea.

Although not yet prepared to engage in actual combat, France agreed to send funds to support the Swedish war effort. This sudden influx of wealth saw Adolphus' army swell to over 36,000.

For their part, the German Protestants were unsure of how to react to Sweden's intervention. They weren't happy with Emperor Ferdinand's new edict, but neither were they pleased about the presence of a foreign 'liberator', who they saw simply as an invader. Then, on 20 May 1631, Tilly inadvertently helped his enemies to put aside their differences when he ordered the brutal Sack of Magdeburg. Over four days his troops rampaged throughout the city, ruthlessly cutting soldiers and civilians down and torching buildings. Appalled by such wanton cruelty, Protestants and moderates across Europe came together in their outrage, a move that ultimately encouraged the Protestant German princes to combine their forces with the Swedish, thereby inflating their joint army to approximately 60,000 men.

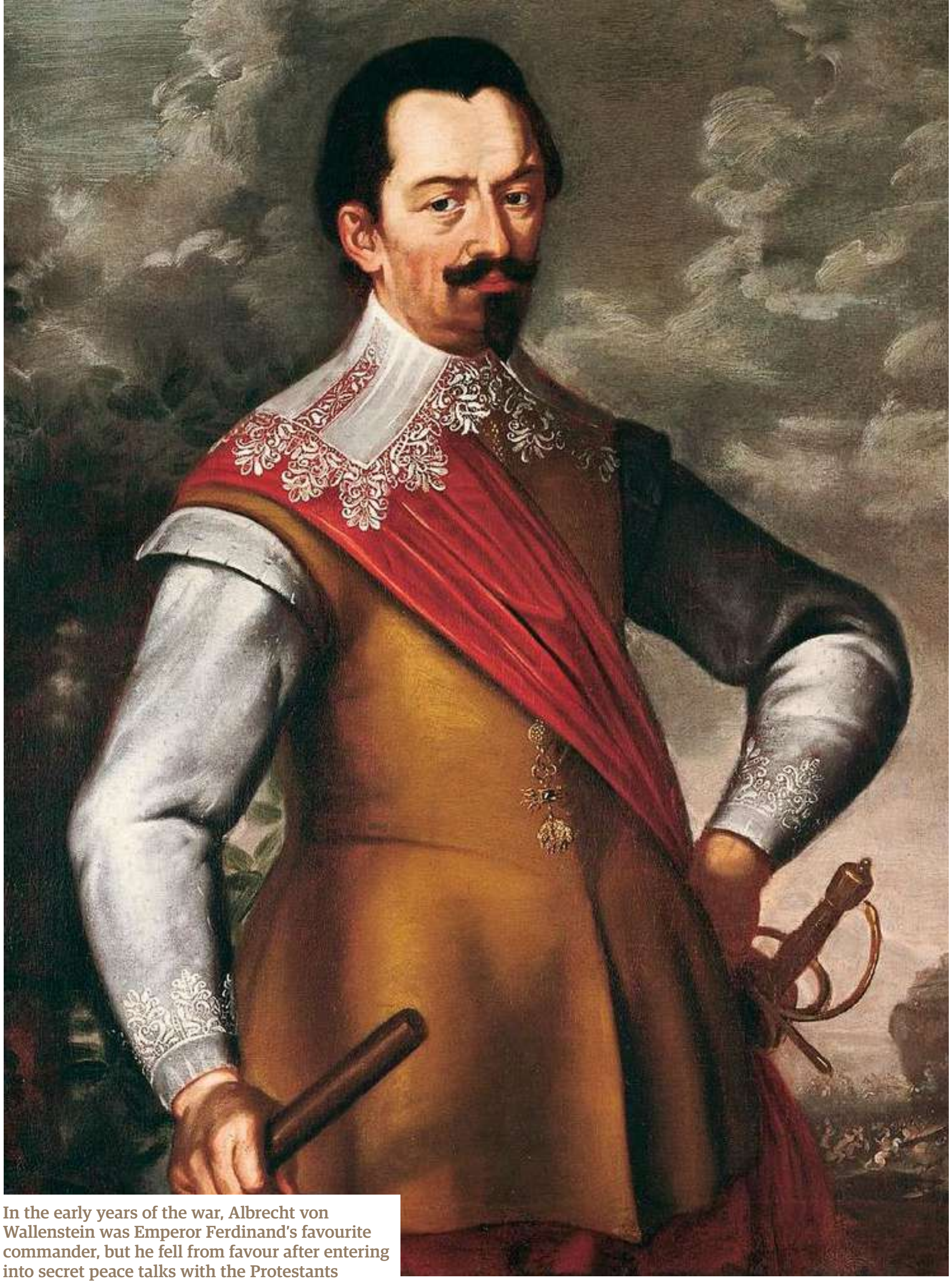
Despite his inferior numbers of approximately 35,000 soldiers, Tilly eagerly met the Swedish-German forces near the village of Breitenfeld (north of Leipzig). The Swedes and allied Germans arranged themselves separately, with the Germans occupying the left flank. Wary of the skilled Swedish soldiers, Tilly sent most of his men to engage the Germans, essentially ignoring the Swedish line. His plan was initially successful, as the Protestant Germans crumbled under the imperial advance. However, the professional Swedish army swiftly wheeled around to face Tilly's forces and moved forwards to engage them.

> **"Wary of the skilled Swedish soldiers, Tilly sent most of his men to engage the Germans"**



Nördlingen saw the obliteration of the Swedish army and reversed the course of the war in favour of the Catholics

Source: Wiki



Source: Wiki

In the early years of the war, Albrecht von Wallenstein was Emperor Ferdinand's favourite commander, but he fell from favour after entering into secret peace talks with the Protestants

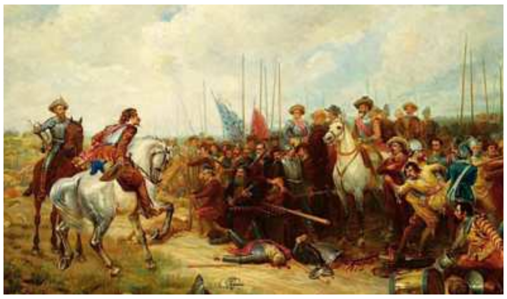
The Battle of Rocroi

Duke d'Enghien's crowning glory

Duke d'Enghien was a young French noble of just 21 years on 19 May 1643. He had just received news that the King of France had died from an illness, but his bigger concern was the 18,000 Spanish infantry and 8,000 cavalrymen that stood between him and the town of Rocroi. The French and Spanish forces had lined up in the pre-dawn gloom, and d'Enghien signalled the advance at sunrise.

The Spanish commander, Melo, had placed a contingent of musketeers in a strip of woodland to cover his left flank. These were easily ousted, and d'Enghien attacked the now unguarded flank while his infantrymen engaged the centre and charged the enemy's right. D'Enghien routed his opposition but noticed the other flank's charge had been repulsed and the centre was struggling. The young commander sent some of his troops in pursuit of the defeated enemy while he himself led a bold charge against the centre. His horse crashed through the leading Spanish line and into the novice German, Italian and Walloon troops. These men quickly withdrew, allowing d'Enghien to smash into Melo's right flank.

Realising he was being enveloped, Melo fled. His veteran infantry fought on despite being abandoned by their commander, but their cause was hopeless. Spain's military had been decapitated. The road to peace had opened.



Source: Wiki

Duke d'Enghien's bold charge turned the tide of the battle and allowed the French to surround the Spanish

Meanwhile, Adolphus personally led a daring charge to capture Tilly's artillery and set it firing on the imperial lines. Sweden's own artillery was dragged onto the other flank, and soon a hail of cannonballs and musket fire was raining down on the pinned imperial forces, causing devastating losses. Tilly had been resoundingly defeated.

The Protestants followed up this monumental success by capturing Frankfurt, Mainz and Heidelberg before the end of 1631, while one of the Protestant German generals also successfully invaded Bohemia and recaptured Prague.

When the campaigning season resumed in the spring of 1632, Adolphus vigorously pursued Tilly and found his army entrenched near the city of Rain (in modern-day Bavaria). A river separated Adolphus from the opposing army, but his talent as a shrewd tactician enabled him to exploit the terrain to his advantage. He used a decoy force to trick Tilly into thinking he was making a straight crossing while simultaneously crossing other contingents at two separate points along the river. The plan was a success, and Tilly was mortally wounded by a cannonball in the fighting. It was another Swedish victory and another crushing defeat for imperial forces, who were now without a loyal standing army in the empire.

As the Spanish forces were still engaged in the Netherlands, the emperor had little choice but to call on Wallenstein. The veteran accepted his summons, raised an army in a matter of weeks and by May 1632 had liberated Prague from the Protestants. He then moved west with 32,000 men to face the Swedes, absorbing the remnants of Tilly's army as he moved to engage. Adolphus and Wallenstein first met at Nuremberg, but their decisive encounter would take place at Lützen in November 1632.

By the winter of 1632, Wallenstein had already sent some of his men into winter quarters, understandably confident that the Swedish would make no further movements so late in the year. Having withdrawn to Lützen to see out the coldest months, Wallenstein reinforced his position with trenches and placed his artillery in strong defensive positions. Protected by his 16,000 remaining troops, the town represented a formidable obstacle. But Adolphus was not to be deterred.

Relying on the element of surprise, the Swedish commander marched his forces towards Lützen, intent on taking the town. However, his efforts at deception were rendered futile when word reached Wallenstein of the Swedish advance. Fearful that Lützen would fall into Swedish hands, Wallenstein ordered that the town be set ablaze. He then arranged his cavalry into a defensive concave shape and retained his elite musketeers in reserve to reinforce as necessary.

The two sides entered combat, and Wallenstein's artillery quickly began to inflict heavy losses on the Swedes. Adolphus could see that his right flank was wavering, so he personally led a charge to reinforce it. The burning of Lützen had rendered visibility low as smoke filled the air, and Adolphus was soon lost in the melee. Separated from his men, he received a gunshot wound, as did his horse. Struggling to control it, he rode into enemy lines, where he was shot again, this time fatally.

Source: Wiki

News of Adolphus' demise rippled through the Protestant ranks, causing them to lose heart and withdraw by mid-afternoon. But their new commander, Prince Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, brought up the reserve and urged the men onwards. The Swedish were ultimately triumphant, but theirs was a Pyrrhic victory; they had suffered approximately 10,000 losses compared to the enemy's 12,000 and their industrious and inventive king lay dead on the battlefield.

Sweden was bruised by the loss Adolphus, but it had not lost its resolve. In 1633 it entered a formal alliance with the French and Protestant German princes as part of the Heilbronn League. At first Sweden remained the dominant military partner in this arrangement, but this dynamic would change after the Battle of Nördlingen in September 1634.

Without their king, the ill-disciplined Swedish troops committed one reckless charge after another into the Catholic forces led by Emperor Ferdinand's son – the King of Hungary – and the Cardinal-Infante of the Spanish Netherlands, who had come to reinforce his cousin. The Protestants all but annihilated their own forces thanks to their lacklustre tactics, ending Sweden's involvement as a major military player for several years.

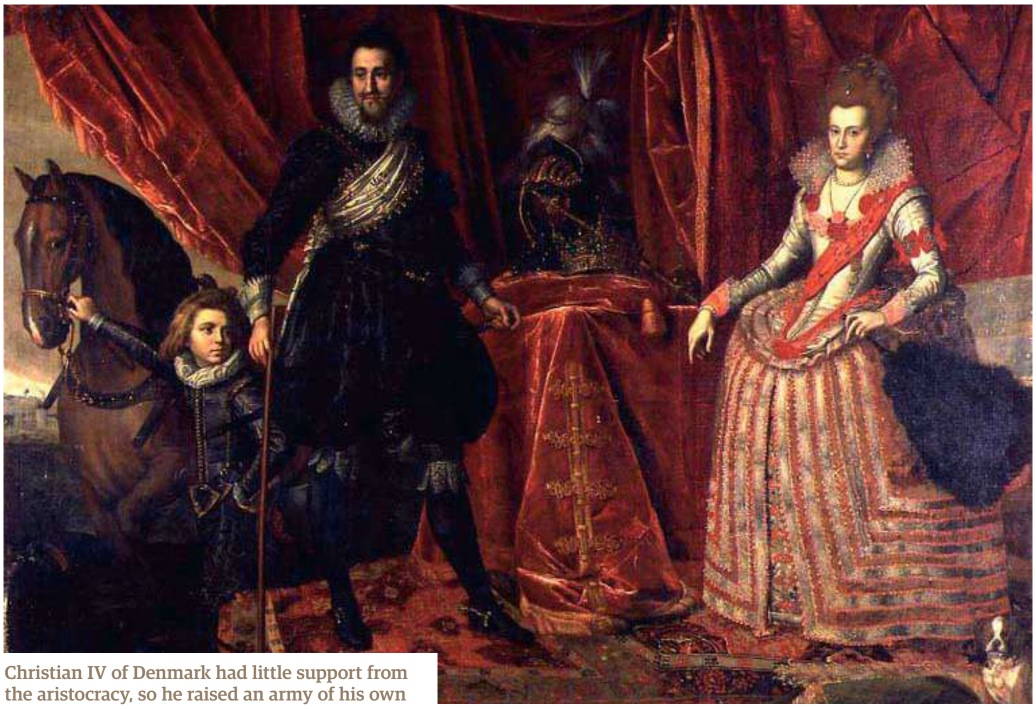
Once more in the ascendancy, Ferdinand forced the Protestant German princes to come to terms at the Peace of Prague in 1635. His former general Wallenstein had been assassinated the previous year, so the emperor was elated when the princes agreed to dissolve both the Catholic League and newly formed Heilbronn League and instead form a unified army under the Emperor's control. In return for power over the military, Ferdinand agreed that the north of the empire would be free once again to practice moderate Protestantism. These concessions essentially ended the religious civil war that had initiated the conflict in the Holy Roman Empire.

One last German prince remained defiant, however – Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. The former commander of the Swedish forces aligned himself with the French, who declared war on Spain in 1635. From this moment on, the primacy of religion, the driving force behind the Thirty Years' War, was usurped by international politics. The two major forces of France and Spain were both Catholic, but unfortunately for the long-suffering Germans they had chosen their country as the battleground to decide who was the major power on the continent.

The French war effort didn't get off to an excellent start. Their troops were poorly trained and their commanders lacked the ingenuity of the Swedes. Seeing the vulnerability of the French, the Cardinal-Infante moved across the Rhine with a mind to invade Paris. He was supported to the south by another imperial force, but its movement across the Rhine was obstructed by Duke Bernard. Reports of Swedish threats to the rear then pulled the imperials back into Germany. The Cardinal-Infante was reluctant to invade without aid, so he too turned back, leaving the French slightly bewildered but undoubtedly relieved that the attack on their capital had failed to materialise.

Emperor Ferdinand II died in 1637 and was immediately succeeded by his son, Ferdinand III. The former Emperor had likely died feeling that he'd left the position more powerful than when he'd found it, but his successor was soon to see all his work undone. The French-allied forces had recently been enjoying parallel success: the resurgent Swedes had defeated an imperial army at Wittstock in the northeast of the empire and Duke Bernard had successfully starved the Rhine town of Breisach into submission.

Duke Bernard passed away from natural causes in 1639, extinguishing the last ember of major



Christian IV of Denmark had little support from the aristocracy, so he raised an army of his own

Source: Wiki

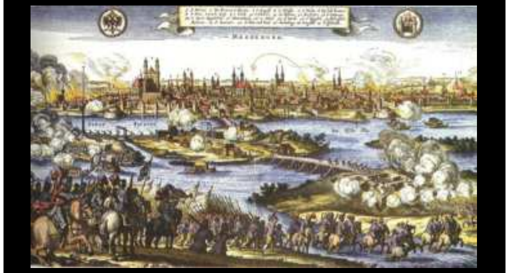
The massacre of Magdeburg

Count Tilly's mistake cost thousands of innocent lives and turned many against the Catholic cause

In April 1631, Count Tilly of the Catholic League joined his lieutenant, Gottfried Pappenheim, outside Magdeburg. The city had recently declared for the King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, and had refused to surrender. Angry at the prolonged siege and anxious about the Swedish army's impending arrival, on 20 May a contingent of troops took the initiative and launched a surprise assault that captured some of the walls. The defence of Magdeburg had failed, and annihilation was soon to follow.

The men unleashed their frustrations on the citizenry by raping, stealing and murdering their way through the streets. Their commanders, who were at first powerless to stop them, could only watch as multiple fires sprouted up across the city. These quickly raged out of control in the blasting wind and before long the air was thick with smoke and flames. By the time the fires had subsided the city was a smouldering ruin.

Of the 30,000 inhabitants within the city prior to the assault, 25,000 had died in the slaughter. Tilly had their bodies cast into the Elbe, and the bloated corpses piled up in the reeds, some with their arms aloft as if raised in prayer. Many of the surviving women and children would soon die from exposure, and the men were forced into servitude if they could not pay their ransom. A census the following year would find that only a few hundred people had persisted in the city. Magdeburg had been stripped of life, and only a phantom of its former self remained.



The forces that came flooding through the gates of Magdeburg offered no mercy to its citizens

German military involvement in the conflict. And yet the war trundled onward.

In 1642, the Second Battle of Breitenfeld saw the Swedish commander Lennart Torstensson, who had served under Gustavus Adolphus, win another victory over an imperial army. This put pressure on Ferdinand III to make a stronger conciliatory peace with the Swedish, but it would be a French victory in 1643 that would remove Ferdinand's Spanish allies from the board and render him powerless.

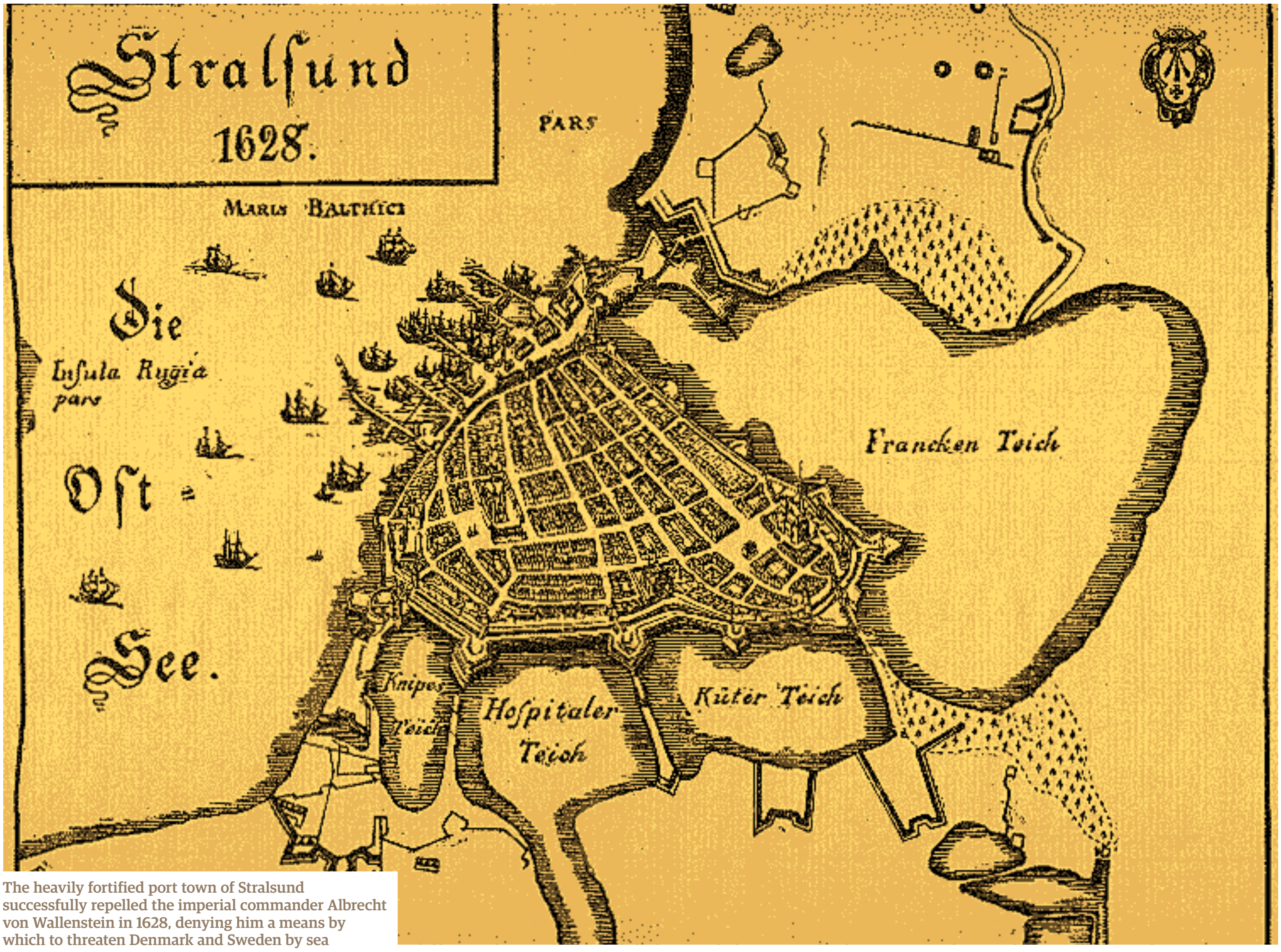
The French had been slowly improving throughout the war. Opting for quality over quantity due to their limited funds, the French shunned the practice of immediately recruiting captured soldiers into their army. This had the advantage of leaving them with a veteran, unified force proud to fight under the French banner. The French commander Duke d'Enghien used this now elite weapon to best the Spanish army amassed outside the town of Rocroi and in doing so obliterated Spanish military might.

With the French-Swedish alliance all-but victorious, peace talks opened at the end of 1644 but progressed at a snail's pace. For their part, the German princes were particularly war weary. Personal ambition coupled with devout passions had driven them into the conflict all those decades ago, but now they felt that they'd suffered enough.

In fact, it was the peasantry of Germany that had been hit particularly hard by the Thirty Years' War. The ruling class had dragged them into the conflict, but it had been their crops that had been razed, their homes destroyed, their finances depleted by taxes, their families forced into cannibalism inside besieged cities and their men pushed into battle.

The battles themselves had inflicted hundreds of thousands of casualties, but the main ravages of war were felt by the families who had no means of feeding their children and no shelter in which to protect them. Exposure, starvation and disease had claimed countless lives and cost Germany dearly. Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, for one, was devastated by the sights he saw in his home country. It had once been so prosperous, but by the end of the Thirty Years' War the lands of the Holy Roman Empire were impoverished in finances, people and spirit.

> ***"Without their king, the ill-disciplined Swedish troops committed one reckless charge after another"***



The heavily fortified port town of Stralsund successfully repelled the imperial commander Albrecht von Wallenstein in 1628, denying him a means by which to threaten Denmark and Sweden by sea

Source: Wiki

1644–1648

THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

The Peace of Westphalia marked the end of the Thirty Years' War, but the treaty forever changed the political landscape of the Holy Roman Empire

Written by Dominic Eames

By the 1640s Europe had been tearing itself apart for three tumultuous decades in a series of wars of supreme destruction and bloodshed that had left millions dead and enveloped a myriad of countries and states. What had erupted as a religious conflict between the Catholics and Protestants within the Holy Roman Empire soon embroiled all of the continent's superpowers: France, Sweden, Spain, Denmark, Poland, Russia, England, Scotland and the independence-seeking Netherlands and Switzerland.

Each had their own cause for entering the fray, so the Thirty Years' War soon concerned not only religion but shifting alliances, bitter rivalries, commercial interests and political aspirations. The war was a conflict of such complexity and scope that in her seminal 1938 work, the 20th-century English historian Dame Veronica Wedgwood described the period as "the outstanding example in European history of meaningless conflict". To reach any kind of lasting peace would be, to put it mildly, no small feat.

That daunting task began in earnest in the 1640s, once the decision had been made on where the peace talks should take place. The Holy Roman Empire had remained at the centre of the conflict over the years and overwhelmingly saw the worst of the destruction and death, so it understandably refused to see talks held outside of its borders. Two cities in Westphalia, in northwestern Germany, were chosen, as this placated all sides, all of whom wished to meet on friendly ground (Münster was staunchly Catholic while Osnabrück had a largely Lutheran population).

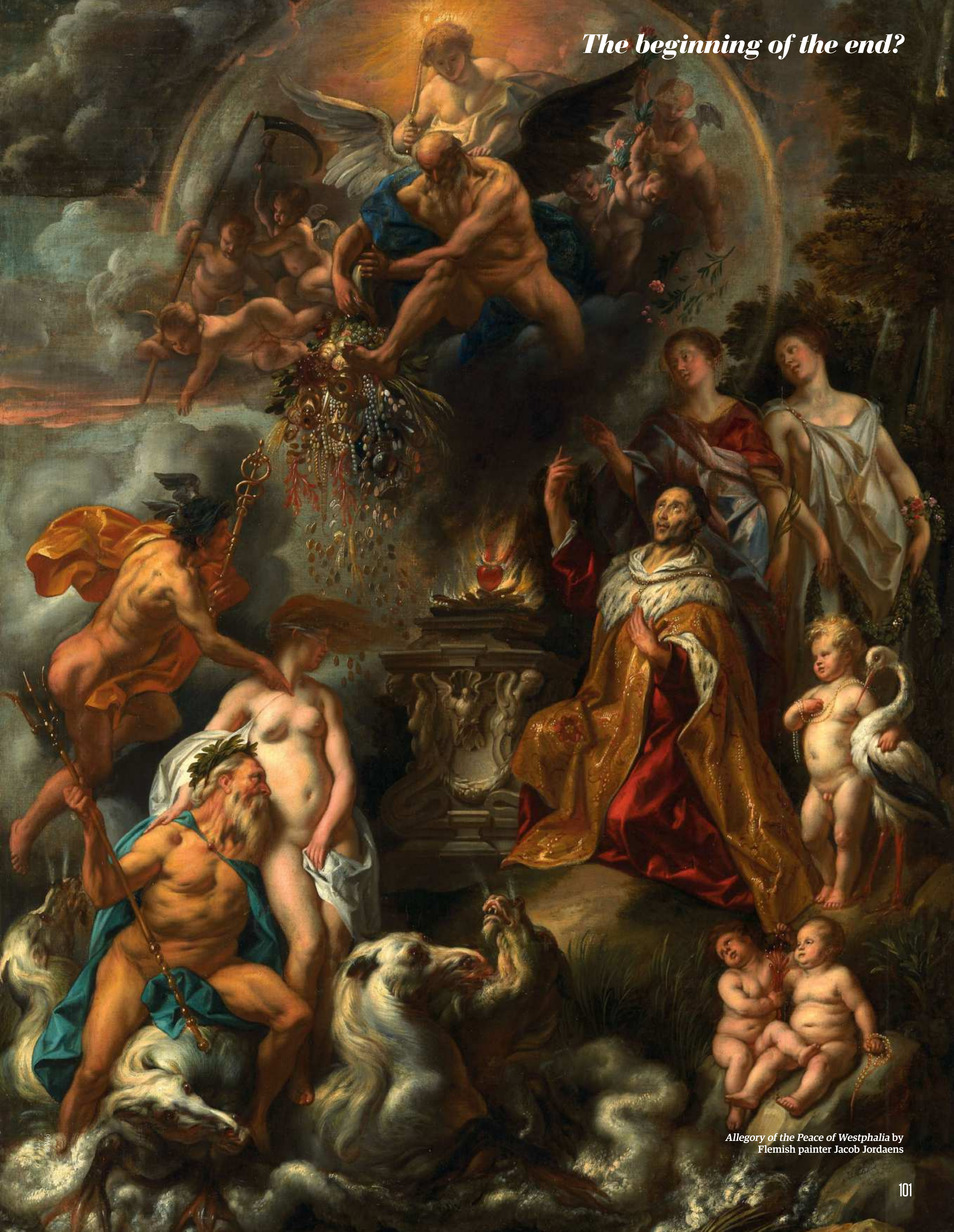
Yet despite these efforts at placation, it was never going to be possible for the talks to be held at a single place and on a specific date that would allow every representative to attend. The organisational pressure to involve no less than 194 states, including dozens of the imperial states, each bringing diplomats and thousands of delegation members, demanded that the negotiations be carried out over many meetings. The piecemeal peace talks therefore lasted for several years, beginning in 1644.

During that time, several men voiced the interests of the Holy Roman Empire, chief among them Maximilian, Count von Trauttmansdorff, a confidant of the emperor and the most influential figure in the negotiations. Along with the experienced diplomat Johann Maximilian von Lamberg and lawyers Johann Krane and Isaac Volmar, he met with the French, Dutch and Spanish envoys in Münster and those of Sweden in Osnabrück until his declining health forced him to step back. The dozens of Protestant imperial states were led by Brandenburg's Johann Graf von Sayn-Wittgenstein. Presiding over the talks was a papal nuncio, or ambassador, from the Vatican named Fabio Chigi (who went on to become pope in 1655).

Progress proved slow. It took six months to work out the seating arrangements and the order in which the diplomats would enter the room, while the representatives of France and Sweden failed to agree to a single meeting due to arguments over protocol. All the while the fighting continued, as did the suffering due to the famines and plagues ravaging Europe, especially in the empire. Following years of back-and-forth discussions and laborious meetings, enough deals and compromises had been reached for the signing of the first treaty on 30 January 1648 between Spain and the Dutch.

Then, on 24 October, two treaties were simultaneously signed in Münster and Osnabrück that would go down in history as the documents that marked the end of the Thirty Years' War, one of the bloodiest conflicts in European history. The Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand III, signed them with France, Sweden and their allies. Following the preamble, the text of the Peace of Westphalia

The beginning of the end?



Allegory of the Peace of Westphalia by Flemish painter Jacob Jordaens

© Wiki

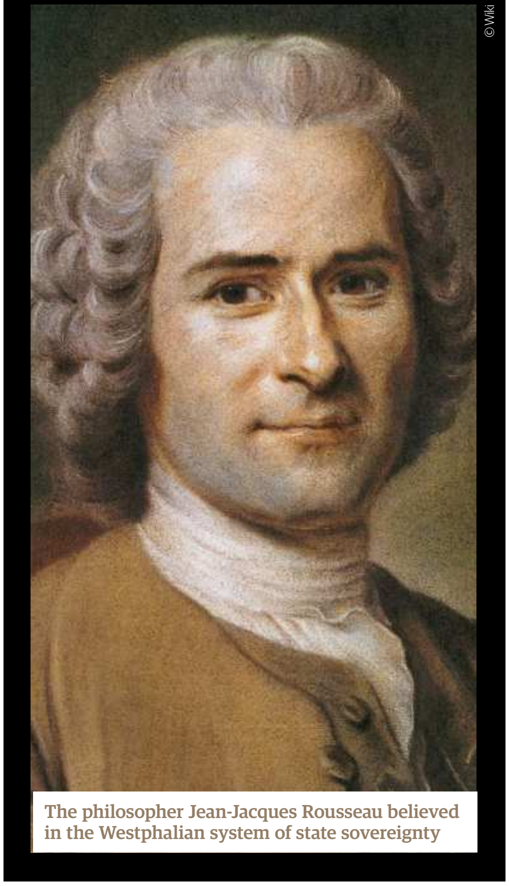
When peace changed the world

The Peace of Westphalia ended a war, but did it also affect international politics for centuries?

"The Peace of Westphalia may well remain the foundation of our political system forever." So said the great Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1761, well over a century after the treaties that ended the Thirty Years' War had been signed. By granting the individual states of the Holy Roman Empire sovereignty, the treaties would be heralded as the foundation of the modern state system.

The principle of international relations that has been attributed to and taken the name of Westphalia declares that every state has sovereignty over its territory and domestic affairs. They are all equal, no matter how large or small, and all must be free of interference from external powers.

Despite the reputation of the Westphalian system, the importance of the 1648 peace to international relations has been rejected by some historians who claim that the treaties contain nothing explicit concerning state sovereignty or non-interference. Instead, it was in the centuries since that such significance was assigned to Westphalia – by opinions much like Rousseau's and those contained within an influential article published in 1948, on the 300th anniversary, by Leo Gross. These views appealed at times of nationalistic fervour but were somewhat superseded as globalisation became more important.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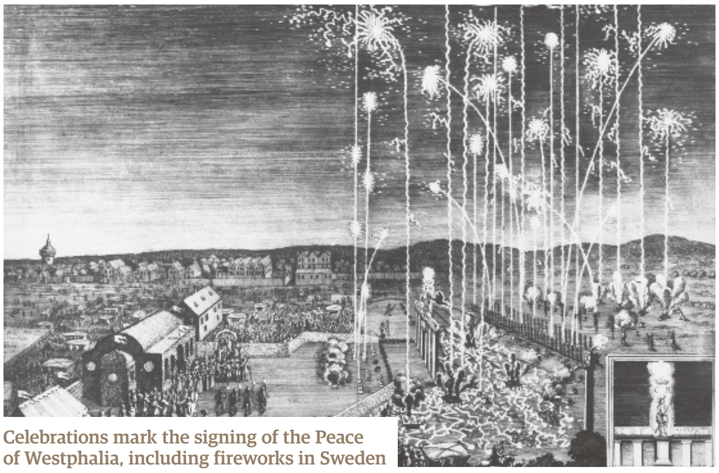
The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed in the Westphalian system of state sovereignty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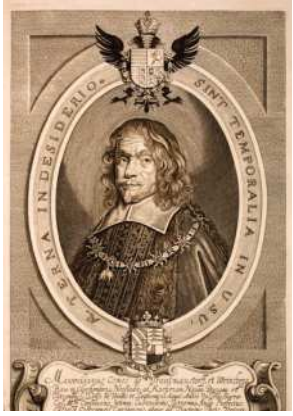
Celebrations mark the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, including fireworks in Sweden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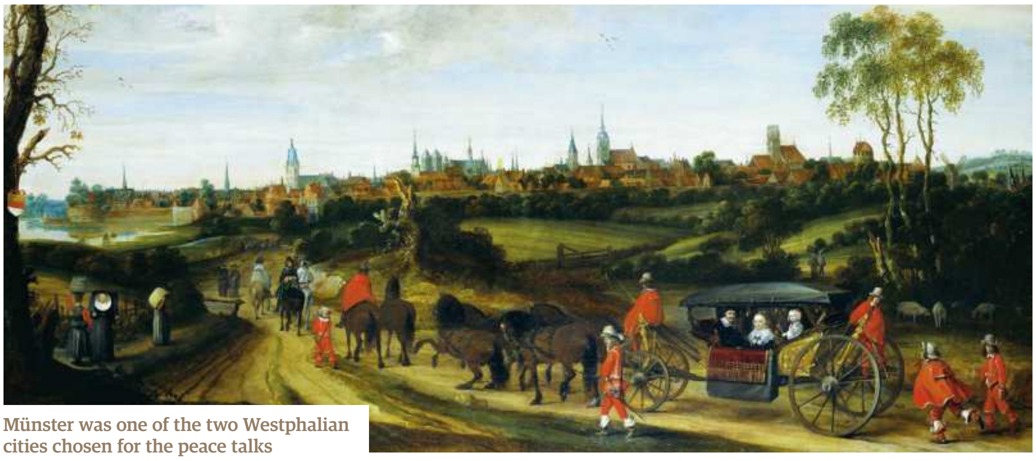
Count von Trauttmansdorff was a driving force in the talks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Münster was one of the two Westphalian cities chosen for the peace talks

read, "That there shall be a Christian and Universal Peace, and a perpetual, true, and sincere amity between his Sacred Imperial Majesty and his most Christian Majesty."

His most Christian Majesty, the King of France, the young Louis XIV, had cause to be more pleased than the emperor. Under the terms of the treaty France secured its ownership over the region of Alsace and the towns of Metz, Toul and Verdun, which gave it a strategically strong frontier on the Rhine River. France's ally Sweden received a huge cash sum along with the territory of western Pomerania, the port cities of Stettin and Wismar, and the imperial regions of Bremen and Verden. This strengthened Sweden's control of the Baltic Sea and gave it a voice in the Imperial Diet.

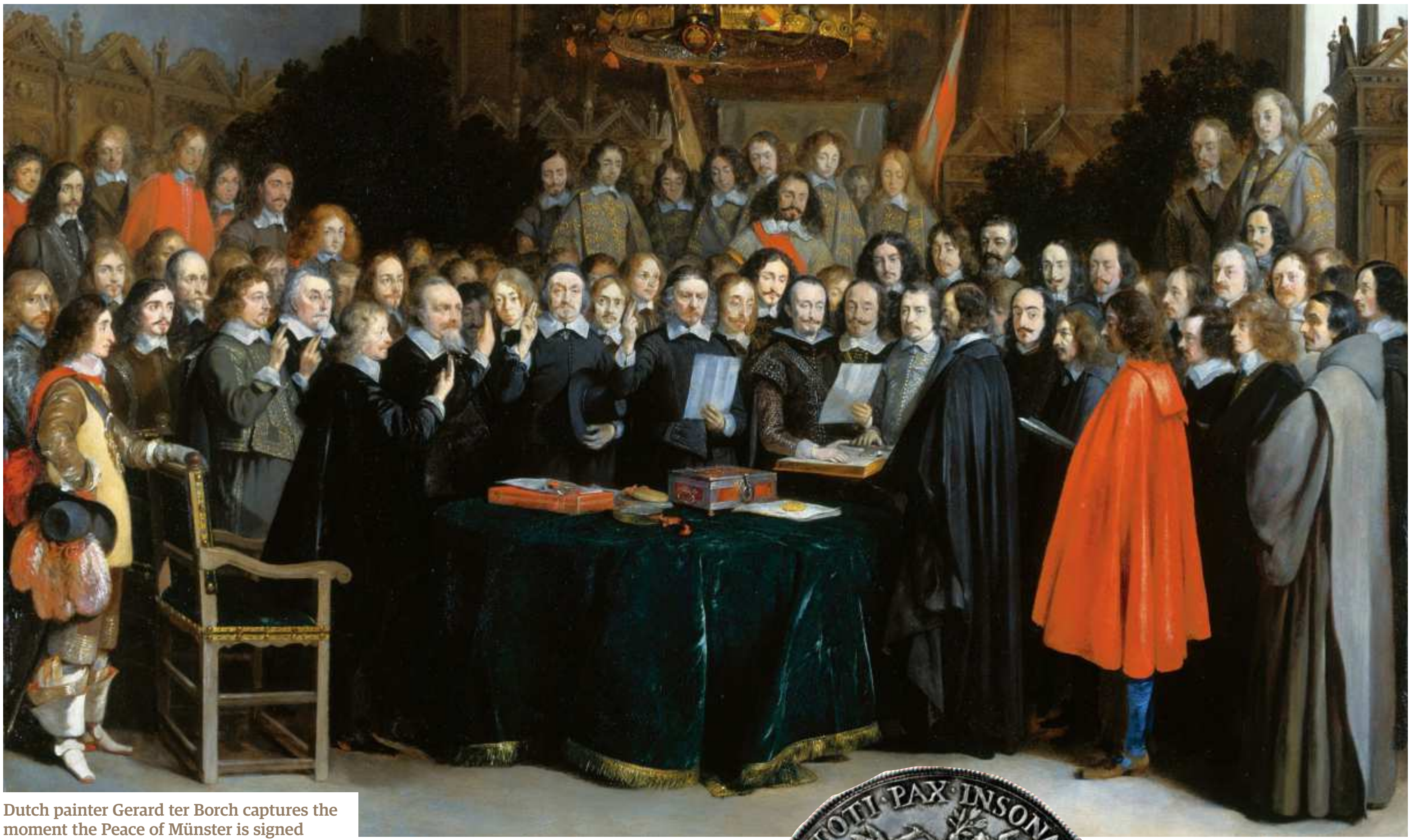
Despite France and Sweden only entering the Thirty Years' War in the 1630s, they both made substantial gains from the carnage, as did the Protestant states of Brandenburg and Bavaria, which acquired key territories including the Upper Palatinate. The Lower Palatinate, meanwhile, was restored to the son of Frederick V, the man whose crowning as King of Bohemia had been one of the catalysts for war.

The other territorial winners were the United Netherlands and the Swiss Confederation. The treaty confirmed them as independent republics from Habsburg-controlled Spain and the empire respectively, a status they had held for decades already, albeit unofficially. Not all conflicts that arose from the war, however, had been ended by the peace, nor all disputes resolved to everyone's satisfaction. In fact, France remained at war with Spain for another 11 years.

Yet it was not just the map of Europe getting a shake-up. The Thirty Years' War had long ago stopped being about religion – after Catholic France had joined on the side of the Protestants against their Habsburg rivals in the empire and Spain – but the treaty arguably made more important steps when it came to ecclesiastical matters.

Most notably, signatories had to recognise the Peace of Augsburg, a treaty signed in 1555 to grant Lutherans tolerance within the empire. This inclusion in the 1648 peace affirmed that the individual states could determine their own religion under the principle of 'cuius regio eius religio' (whose realm, his religion) and extended Augsburg's tolerance towards the Calvinists. Christians living in a state of a different denomination to their own had the freedom to worship in public during certain hours and in private at their will.

A solution was also devised to resolve disputes over land ownership. By setting the year 1624 as a fixed point, the treaty granted possession to those who had been in control of the land on 1 January 1624, regardless of whether it changed hands. Even if the ruling prince converted, they would forfeit



Dutch painter Gerard ter Borch captures the moment the Peace of Münster is signed

© Wiki

their lands to ensure it remained in line with the 1624 template.

The empire was bound to religious toleration and had to adapt to a world in which Catholics and (some) Protestants were free to worship. Pope Innocent X became so angry upon hearing the news that he announced the peace to be "null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, empty of meaning and effect for all time".

The truth would prove to be quite the opposite for the Holy Roman Empire, as the Peace of Westphalia made changes that were anything but empty of meaning and effect within its borders. The empire had lost land and the ability to enforce a single religion, while the individual states and principalities within it became more powerful. The treaty recognised their sovereignty and empowered them to make their own treaties, allowing them to reject the hegemonic grip of the emperor in favour of governing themselves.

The fragmentation of the empire into around 300 semi-autonomous states became more pronounced. Just ten years after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, dozens of German princes formed the League of the Rhine with France against the emperor, and areas like Brandenburg and Bavaria emerged as powers in their own right. The war left the empire devastated, with vast swathes of land plundered and thousands of people dead (Germany lost 20 per cent of its population). This was then followed by a peace treaty that dashed any hopes of the empire maintaining its grip on all of its territories.

As the influence of the Habsburgs waned, other nations in Europe rose to power. The French King Louis XIV (also known as the 'Sun King') would dominate European politics for the remainder of the 17th century, while the empire had to face ongoing threats from the Ottomans to the east. It did pull off a great victory at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, marking the beginning of the end of Ottoman dominance, and it would not be until the early 19th century before the end of the empire actually came, but Westphalia had already signalled the beginning of the end.

The peace itself, however, has been said to have laid the foundations of the beginning of something new: the modern state system based on the principle of a state's sovereignty over its territory and non-interference by foreign powers. It also helped establish a new form of international relations where diplomacy, coexistence and collective security became the norm, which to this day can be referred to as the 'Westphalian system'.

The signing of the treaties in 1648 did not end all war in Europe, nor did they bring about the immediate end of the Holy Roman Empire. Their importance to international relations have been vehemently debated and questioned ever since too. Yet the Peace of Westphalia is rightly remembered as a crucial moment in European history, a move away from the old way to a new order. In that way, the diplomats in Münster and Osnabrück succeeded in achieving the feat that seemed so unlikely in the chaotic aftermath of the Thirty Years' War: a lasting peace.

HINC TOTI PAX INSONAT ORBI
MONASTERIVM
WESTPHA
1648

© Alamy

A medal commemorating the end of three decades of bloody war

"The treaty dashed any hopes of the empire maintaining its grip on all of its territories"

September 1683

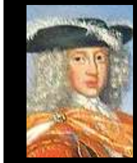
BATTLE OF VIENNA

The Ottomans pulled out all the stops but failed to take the city they coveted

Written by Charles Ginger

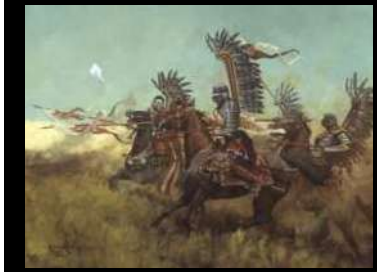
Holy Roman Empire

TROOPS: 20,000
CAVALRY: 20,000



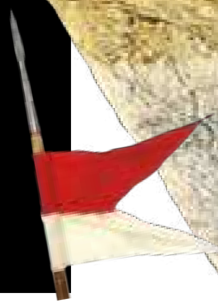
CHARLES V, DUKE OF LORRAINE
LEADER

Experienced in battle, this courageous Austrian statesman convinced the relief army to take the shortest route and devised the approach to battle.



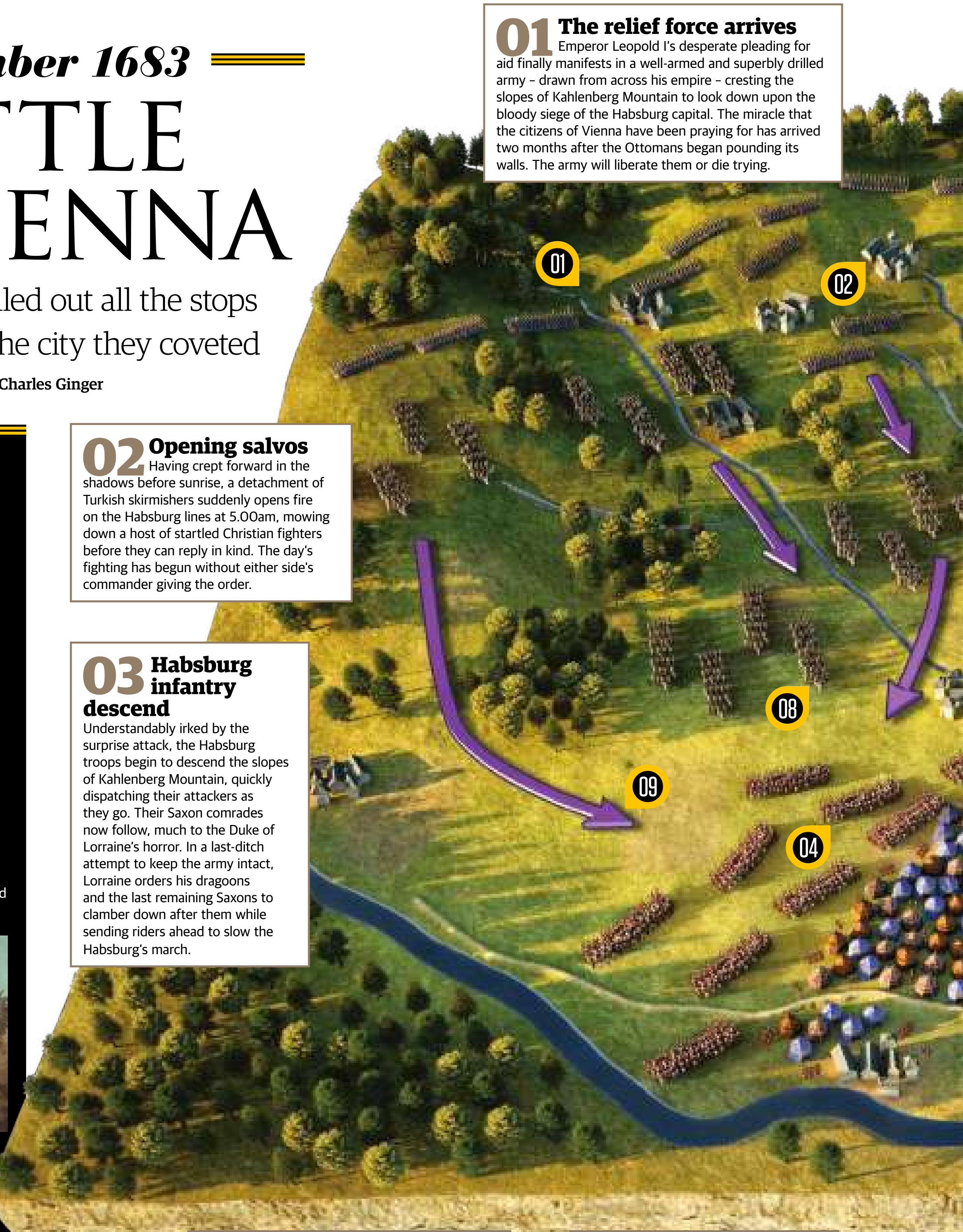
POLISH HUSSARS
KEY UNIT

The fabled 'winged' hussars of the Polish cavalry were an elite shock force built to charge the enemy and pave the way for their comrades to sweep in behind and finish the job.



KOPIA
KEY WEAPON

Draped with a silk banner, this 16-foot lance had an iron point, with metal strips layered below it to support the head and protect the top.



01 The relief force arrives

Emperor Leopold I's desperate pleading for aid finally manifests in a well-armed and superbly drilled army – drawn from across his empire – cresting the slopes of Kahlenberg Mountain to look down upon the bloody siege of the Habsburg capital. The miracle that the citizens of Vienna have been praying for has arrived two months after the Ottomans began pounding its walls. The army will liberate them or die trying.

02 Opening salvos

Having crept forward in the shadows before sunrise, a detachment of Turkish skirmishers suddenly opens fire on the Habsburg lines at 5.00am, mowing down a host of startled Christian fighters before they can reply in kind. The day's fighting has begun without either side's commander giving the order.

03 Habsburg infantry descend

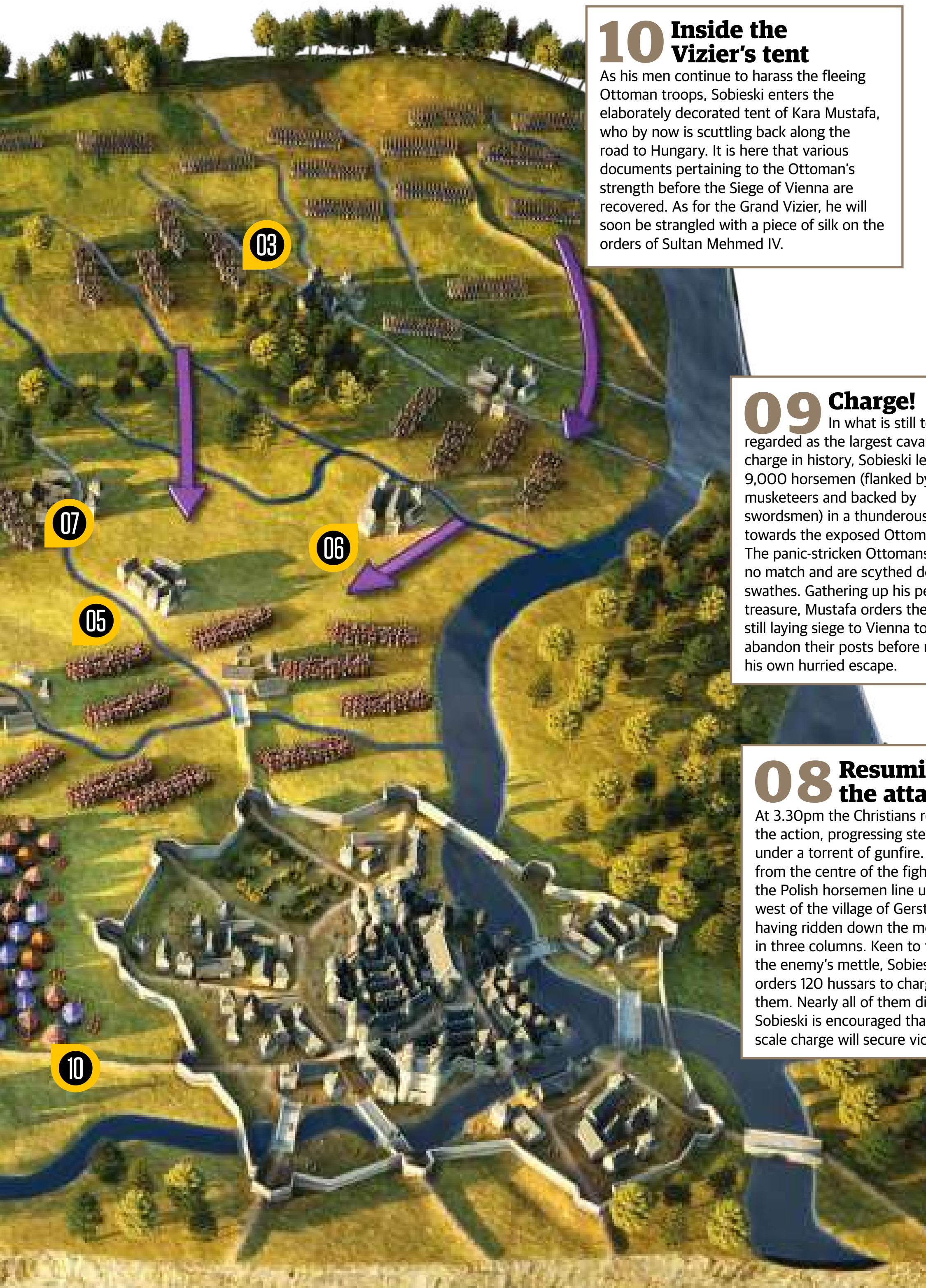
Understandably irked by the surprise attack, the Habsburg troops begin to descend the slopes of Kahlenberg Mountain, quickly dispatching their attackers as they go. Their Saxon comrades now follow, much to the Duke of Lorraine's horror. In a last-ditch attempt to keep the army intact, Lorraine orders his dragoons and the last remaining Saxons to clamber down after them while sending riders ahead to slow the Habsburg's march.

04 The Vizier plays his hand

With the Saxons concentrating their fire on the village of Nussdorf as their infantry closes on the Turkish defenders, Kara Mustafa decides the critical moment has come. At around 10.00am he orders his bodyguards and household troops to advance to a steep crest known as the Türkenschanz (Turk's Redoubt).

05 Cometh the king

Sobieski now prepares to send his cavalry into the fray. Meanwhile, Lorraine urges his men towards the Türkenschanz, where Mustafa has planted the Standard of the Prophet in a bid to rally his men.



06 A foothold

After hours of bitter fighting the Habsburgs finally take the heavily defended village of Nussdorf. Their Saxon allies soon follow suit, ejecting the Turkish from the nearby settlement of Heiligenstadt.

07 Halt!

With two villages secured and aware that his men are struggling to maintain their gradual advance on empty stomachs and weary feet, Lorraine commands the Christian army to stop some time just after noon. An eerie silence descends over the battlefield as both sides halt beneath the beating sun.

08 Resuming the attack

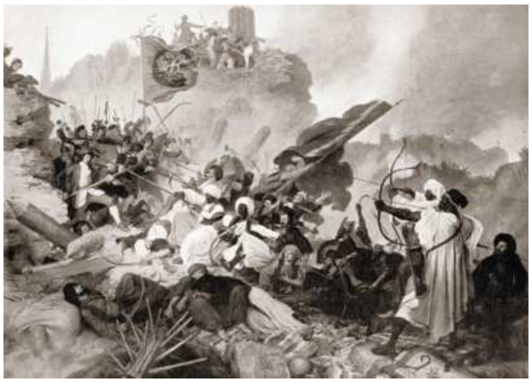
At 3.30pm the Christians restart the action, progressing steadily under a torrent of gunfire. Away from the centre of the fighting the Polish horsemen line up west of the village of Gersthof, having ridden down the mountain in three columns. Keen to test the enemy's mettle, Sobieski orders 120 hussars to charge them. Nearly all of them die, but Sobieski is encouraged that a full-scale charge will secure victory.

09 Charge!

In what is still today regarded as the largest cavalry charge in history, Sobieski leads 9,000 horsemen (flanked by musketeers and backed by swordsmen) in a thunderous charge towards the exposed Ottoman line. The panic-stricken Ottomans are no match and are scythed down in swathes. Gathering up his personal treasure, Mustafa orders the men still laying siege to Vienna to abandon their posts before making his own hurried escape.

10 Inside the Vizier's tent

As his men continue to harass the fleeing Ottoman troops, Sobieski enters the elaborately decorated tent of Kara Mustafa, who by now is scuttling back along the road to Hungary. It is here that various documents pertaining to the Ottoman's strength before the Siege of Vienna are recovered. As for the Grand Vizier, he will soon be strangled with a piece of silk on the orders of Sultan Mehmed IV.

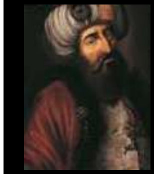


Vienna's valiant defenders rush to block a breach in the city's battered walls as Ottoman archers take aim

Ottoman Empire

TROOPS: 137,000 approx.

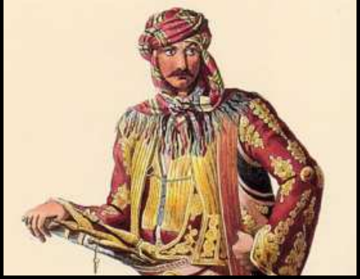
CANNON: 300



GRAND VIZIER KARA MUSTAFA

LEADER

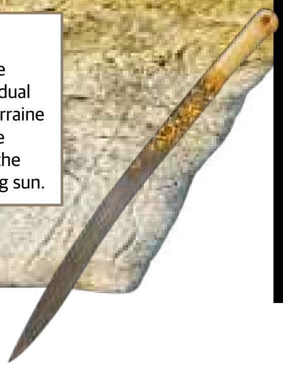
Adopted into the family of Sultan Mehmed IV as a child, the loyal Mustafa was hell-bent on plucking the 'golden apple' of the Habsburg capital for his ruler.



JANISSARIES

KEY UNIT

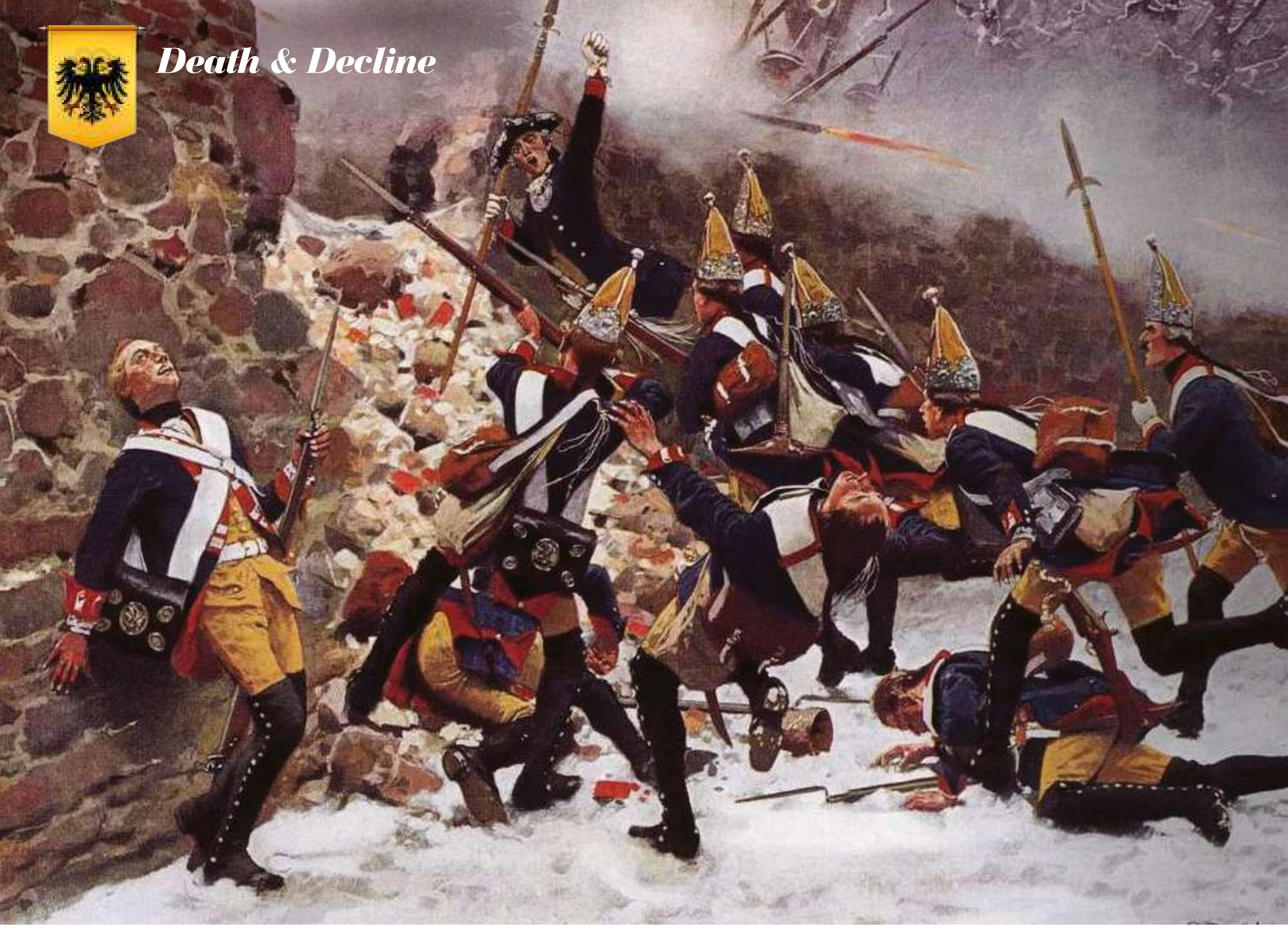
Formed into ortas (battalions) of 300 men, these superbly trained soldiers would have been forcibly recruited as children. Each man was tattooed with the number of his unit and entitled to a salary for life.



YATAGAN

KEY WEAPON

This curved sword was the signature weapon of a Janissary and proved to be an effective weapon in the hand-to-hand fighting that the Ottomans specialised in.



18th century

DUEL OF EAGLES

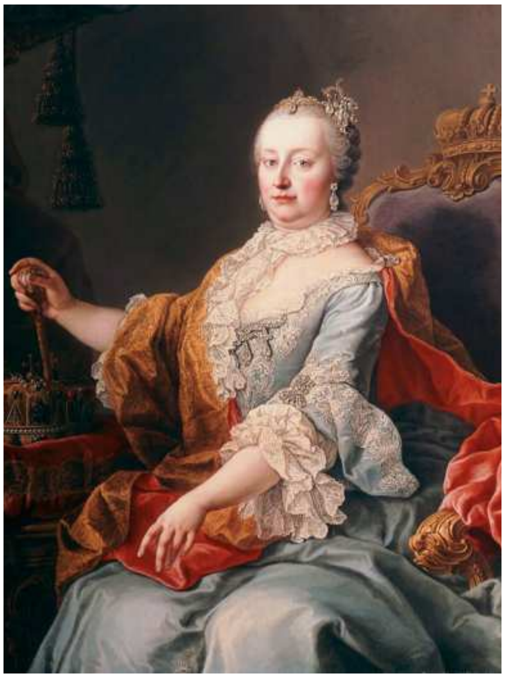
By the 1700s the Holy Roman Empire was a fractured land. A clash of two former allies would initiate its demise

Written by Marc DeSantis

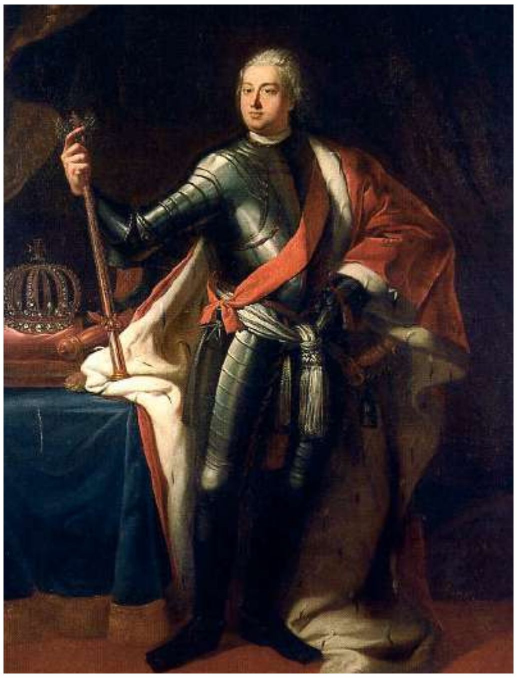
Germany in the 18th century was a divided land. Though the Holy Roman Empire embraced much of it, they were not one and the same. By 1700, two royal houses were dominant within imperial confines: the Catholic House of Habsburg, seated in Vienna, Austria, and the Protestant House of Hohenzollern, ensconced in Berlin, Prussia. Wise and fortunate enough to marry well, the Habsburgs had completely dominated the elective monarchy of the empire since the early 15th century. The Habsburgs also controlled many large territories outside of Germany, such as Italy, Bohemia, the Netherlands and Burgundy, and so while they were an immensely powerful presence in Germany, their dynastic interests were far more widespread.

The Holy Roman Empire, often referred to simply as Austria, was not a nation-state in the sense that Britain or France were. The Habsburg dynasty stood at the apex of a vast feudal pyramid. The empire, with a population of some 22 million, was thus a massive, diffuse, polyglot, multinational structure that defied easy and effective rule from Vienna.

Habsburg rule fell upon a dozen different nationalities in the 18th century, most of which were found along the Danube River. The three core ethnic groups were the Germans, Hungarians and Czechs. The Habsburgs' strongest support came from the Germans, though they were not united by a common sense of national identity. The unwieldy nature of the Habsburg dominion meant



Maria Theresa was inexperienced when she became empress but soon proved herself a capable ruler



King Frederick William I of Prussia, the father of Frederick the Great, was called the 'Soldier King'

> "The unwieldy nature of the Habsburg dominion meant that it would often be at a disadvantage"

that it would often find itself at a competitive disadvantage when pitted against better-organised states such as Prussia.

Prussia was a much smaller, more compact state. Originally belonging to the Teutonic Knights order, in 1525 Albrecht von Hohenzollern, the last of its Grand Masters, had done away with its religious character, declared himself Duke of Prussia and became a vassal of the King of Poland.

The duchy would eventually pass to the Elector of Brandenburg, John Sigismund. Vassalage to Poland came to an end in 1660, but as Elector of Brandenburg the Hohenzollerns were, at least nominally, subject to the Habsburg emperors.

Prussia would suffer heavily during the Thirty Years' War as foreign armies marched across it and drafted its men into their ranks. The development of a militarily powerful state would derive in large part from a desire to prevent Prussia from being nothing more than a marching route for foreign armies again. Fielding a strong army, beginning in the latter 17th century with huge resources devoted to it, would allow Prussia to punch much further above its weight in European affairs than its limited population would otherwise have allowed.

Prussia itself would be raised, with imperial approval, to the status of a kingdom in 1701. The first 'king in Prussia' was Frederick I, and his domain would comprise all of the holdings of the Brandenburg Electors.

The War of Spanish Succession

The long War of Spanish Succession arose out of a fear of the thrones of both Spain and France uniting under the Bourbon dynasty. Louis XIV, a Bourbon, already ruled France. Upon the death in 1700 of the childless Habsburg King Charles II of Spain, the throne of that nation was left to Louis XIV's grandson, Philip, the Duke of Anjou, newly crowned as King Philip V of Spain. Fearful of the consequences of having so much power concentrated in Bourbon hands, a coalition of allied states including England, the Netherlands, Bavaria and Austria formed to restrain France, which had sent its armies over the frontier into the Spanish Netherlands to claim a piece of the patrimony.

Prussia would side with Austria in this war. Frederick the Great would be present at the Battle of Malplaquet in 1709 with his brutish and physically abusive father, King Frederick William

The Battle of Kolín

Frederick the Great's first defeat came at Kolín, a small town on the Elbe River, against a larger Austrian army holding a strong defensive position

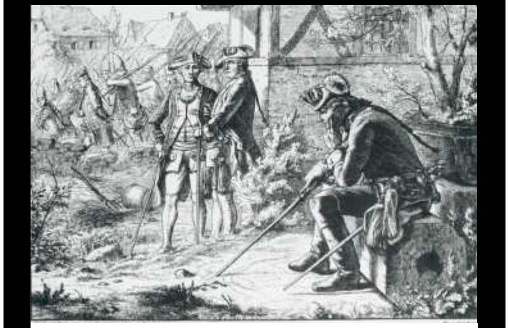
Frederick the Great was not always successful on the battlefield. During the Third Silesian War, which was part of the larger Seven Years' War, Frederick invaded Bohemia and defeated an Austrian army outside of Prague on 6 May 1757. Frederick next laid siege to the city, while the Austrians despatched an army under Field Marshal Leopold Graf von Daun to rescue it.

With many of his troops devoted to prosecuting the siege of Prague, Frederick could lead an army of just 32,000 to confront Daun. Leaving Prague, he encountered the Austrians, over 50,000 strong, settled among a group of low hills close to Kolín on 18 June 1757. As was his wont, Frederick seized the initiative and ordered an assault on the Austrian right wing, without taking the time to conduct a proper reconnaissance of the enemy position.

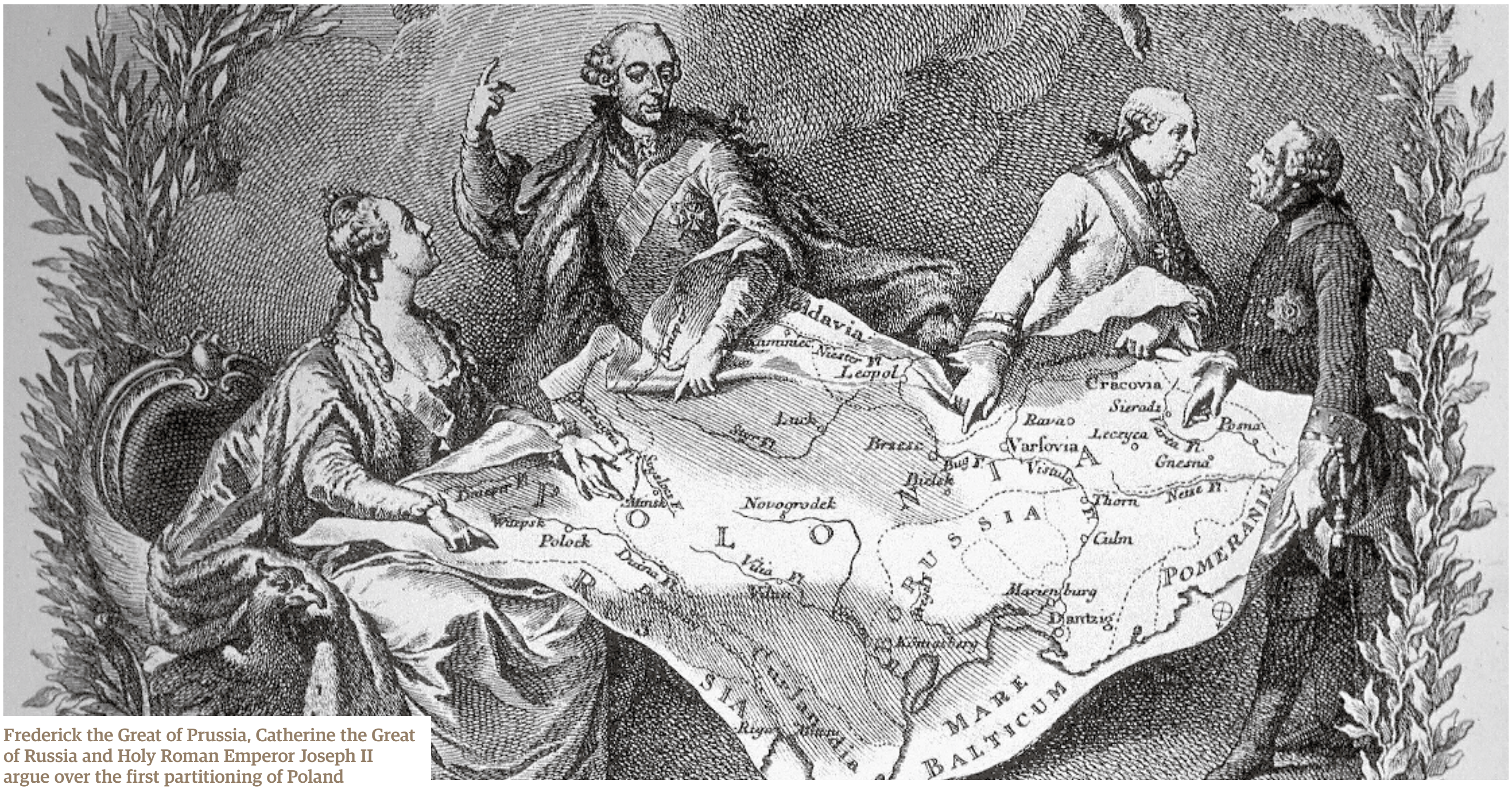
The approach march, in the June heat, tired the Prussian army, and Frederick had to allow them a few hours to recuperate. While the Prussians rested, Daun repositioned a portion of his left wing troops to his right. The Prussians failed to notice this reinforcement, and their attack went ahead as originally planned.

The Prussian assault enjoyed some initial success but soon foundered, and Daun fed in more troops to support the beleaguered Austrian right wing. Elsewhere, Croatian light troops in the Austrian army pestered the Prussians on their own right wing so severely that one of Frederick's subordinate commanders, General Christian Hermann von Manstein, conducted an unsanctioned assault on the Austrian position to his fore. The battle thus degenerated into a slugging match up and down the battleline, something Frederick had wished to avoid as this gave the advantage to the more numerous Austrians, who also held a stronger defensive position.

Austrian and Saxon cavalry charges won the day, pummelling the Prussians remorselessly. In Vienna, the mood after learning of the victory was ecstatic. Empress Maria Theresa commemorated the victory with the creation of the Order of Maria Theresa, and she bestowed the first award of its Grand Cross upon the triumphant Field Marshal Daun. Kolín was to be Frederick's first defeat. Prior to this he had known only success. Though Frederick would soon recover, his reputation for invincibility had been dispelled.



A dejected Frederick the Great ponders the Battle of Kolín after his defeat



Frederick the Great of Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia and Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II argue over the first partitioning of Poland

I, when the Prussians fought alongside Austria against France.

The War of Austrian Succession

Another war over a throne would involve that of Austria's itself, and Prussia would be the primary antagonist of the empire and a beneficiary of the war. Emperor Charles VI had tried to ensure that his young daughter, Maria Theresa, would ascend to the imperial throne. Problematically, imperial law required the inheritor to be a male, and so Charles had doggedly acquired the signatures of other European monarchs to the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, a document that explicitly acknowledged a female's right to inherit.

With Charles' death in 1740, the promises of the Pragmatic Sanction were revealed to be hollow. Young Frederick the Great, having just become King of Prussia himself that same year, would not let the Pragmatic Sanction stand in the way of him conquering the wealthy Austrian province of Silesia. During the First Silesian War, part of the larger War of Austrian Succession, Frederick inflicted a defeat on the Austrian army at the Battle of Mollwitz on 10 April 1741 that won Silesia for Prussia. Sensing Austrian weakness, France now jumped into the war and captured Prague in Bohemia. Seeing a young and inexperienced woman on the imperial throne, other monarchs sensed an opportunity to grab territory from Austria.

Everything looked rather dark for the embattled Maria Theresa, but then her fortunes improved. Hungary entered the war as an ally, and Prague slipped from France's grasp. Austria next gained two other allies: Britain and Sardinia. Frederick decided to make his own peace in July 1743 with Austria, his price being Silesia, which he already held by force of arms. Saxony also departed with Prussia. Maria Theresa now struck back at France and Bavaria, yet she would be attacked once again by Frederick, who had become afraid of a resurgent and overly strong Austria and moved to capture Prague. He was later ejected from Bohemia but won a victory over the Austrians at Hohenfriedberg in December 1745.

> "Everything looked rather dark for the embattled Maria Theresa, but then her fortunes improved"

The Seven Years' War

Peace with Austria followed, but war came again between the two rivals with the eruption of the Seven Years' War. Uncharacteristically poor reconnaissance by the Prussians, combined with a strong Austrian defensive position, enabled the Austrian army to deliver a sharp check to Frederick at the Battle of Kolín in June 1757. Frederick regained his footing later that same year, winning victories over the Austrians and the French at Rossbach on 5 November and another over the Austrians at Leuthen on 5 December. The war did not go as well afterward for Prussia, however, but Frederick's luck held. The passing of Czarina Elizabeth in January 1762 saw Russia bow out of the war. Now bereft of a major ally and having to turn its attention towards Ottoman Turkey, Austria concluded a peace with Prussia in February 1763. As a result of the Third Silesian War, which was part of the larger Seven Years' War, Prussia gained control of Silesia once and for all.

The Partition of Poland

With the shameful Partition of Poland, Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great found themselves acting in concert to dismember a nation. Poland's nobility had long been resistant to coming together to form a strong, centralised state, so jealous were they of their ancient rights and prerogatives that they could brook no restraints that a powerful monarch might impose. Poland was thus an arena of aristocratic anarchy in the 18th century, and this chaos left her prey to her stronger, organised neighbours such as Prussia and Russia.

A Polish rebellion against Catherine the Great of Russia's appointed ruler brought about an invasion by Russia. Ottoman Turkey came to the aid of the Poles, but the Russian army enjoyed great success against the Turks. This stirred the anxieties of Frederick, who worried that Russia would become too powerful, and also about the consequences of a wider European war, which could be very negative for Prussia.

In August 1769, Frederick, in a diplomatic triumph, managed to convince both Catherine and Joseph, Maria Theresa's son, that a partition of Poland was in all of their interests. Coming to terms over Poland would let them avert a war that wouldn't help any of them. Frederick frightened Catherine with the spectre of Austrian intervention if her Russian armies continued their march on Constantinople, the Ottoman Empire's capital. Instead, Frederick said, Austria should be fed a chunk of Poland that would keep her from intervening in favour of Turkey.

Maria Theresa was herself aghast at the plan to carve up Poland, but her hand was forced by the eagerness with which Catherine and Frederick were moving ahead with the division. Russia was to take Polish lands lying east of the Dvina and Dnieper rivers, while Prussia was to gain the territory between Brandenburg and East Prussia.

Maria Theresa saw these actions as nothing but a bold land grab, and she was loath to mimic their 'wickedness'. Despite her natural reluctance to be a party to what she considered a crime, her hand was forced by the moves made by Russia and Prussia, and also by her son Joseph, eagerly abetted by her own adviser, Prince Kaunitz, who were eager to grab a share for Austria of the Polish spoils. The partition went ahead on 5 August 1772, with Austria taking a sizeable portion. Subsequent partitions took place in 1793 and 1795. Ultimately, Poland as an independent nation was to disappear from European maps for well over a century.

Crushed by Napoleon

Both Austria and Prussia would be overwhelmed in the early 19th century by the forces of France. The French Revolution had unleashed the fires of nationalism, and France's Republican armies had grown huge as a result of a mass mobilisation of the populace. The appearance of the brilliant Napoleon Bonaparte as France's leader (and eventual emperor) would see the Austrians mauled at Austerlitz in December 1805, followed by the humbling of Prussia in the twin battles of Jena-Auerstedt in October 1806.

Austria and Prussia's old-style dynastic armies, composed of relatively small numbers of trained, professional soldiers, proved no match for the larger and better-led French army. As a result of the drubbing, Napoleon forced Francis II to resign the title of Holy Roman Emperor in 1806, and declare an end to the Holy Roman Empire. Afterward, however, a rejuvenated Austria and a recovered Prussia would find themselves on the same side fighting against Napoleon once more.

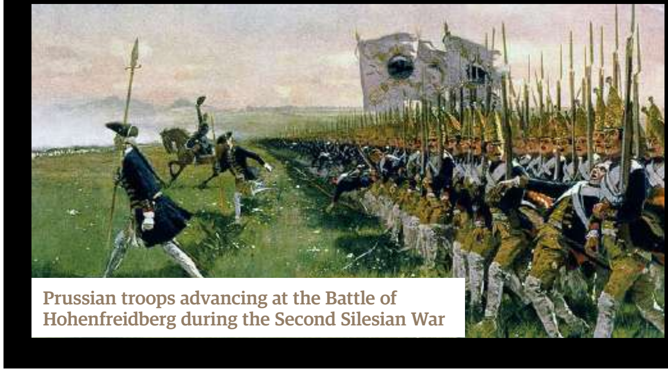
Frederick the Great's army reforms

Frederick put his own stamp on the excellent army he inherited from his martially minded father

Frederick the Great inherited an army from his father that had been exquisitely trained. Yet this force of around 80,000 men lacked the experience of real war, as Frederick William I had been reluctant to use it in battle. Upon gaining the throne in 1740, the new king set about putting his own mark upon it.

Frederick quickly disbanded the Potsdam Giants, a guard unit of unusually tall men with whom his father had been obsessed. With the money he saved he formed seven new regiments of soldiers that would be of much more use in actual warfare. Aside from these, Frederick also raised an additional 16 battalions, five hussar squadrons and one squadron of life guards. At its largest the Prussian army under Frederick would field around 200,000 soldiers.

The cavalry had been a perennial weakness of the Prussian army. The Battle of Mollwitz, a victory for Prussia over Austria that secured Silesia, had been won by the Prussian infantry. The cavalry had performed poorly, and Frederick knew he had to do something. His reforms turned it into a much more effective force. On 4 June 1745, during the Second Silesian War, the revitalised Prussian cavalry contributed heavily to Frederick's victory at Hohenfriedberg.

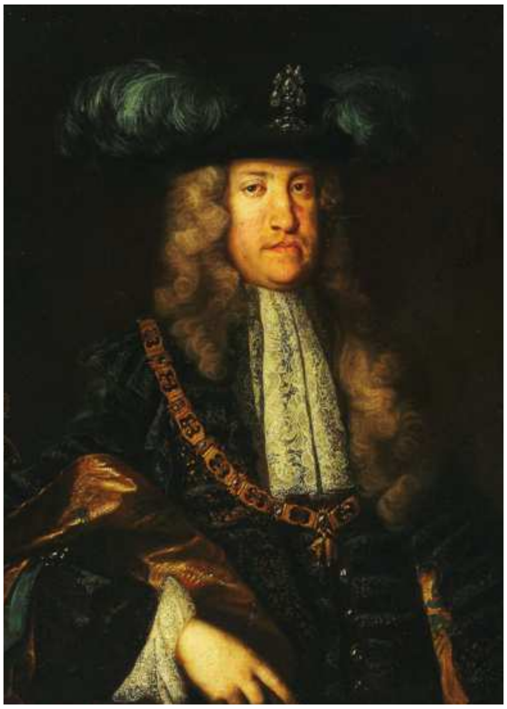


Prussian troops advancing at the Battle of Hohenfreidberg during the Second Silesian War

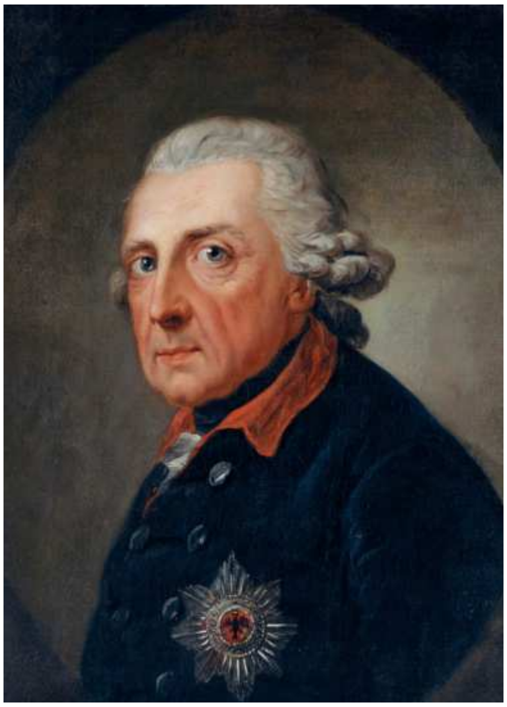
To lead these soldiers Frederick instituted an officer corps in which promotions would be earned on merit; poor performers would not be advanced. All, even officers of noble origin, would start out as cadets; a commission would not be granted to them merely on the basis of birth.

Frederick was also a firm believer in the offence. In his copious writings on war, he emphasised speed when on the attack. To improve the battlefield manoeuvring of his army, he had his soldiers practise deploying from marching column into a battleline, or from a line into a column; forming themselves into a large powerful body, or into a very long line.

Frederick also innovated tactically. His signature manoeuvre was the attack in 'oblique order', in which his army advanced with one wing far in advance of the other, which was said to be 'refused'. The idea was to defeat one of the enemy army's wings before the rest of its army could become involved. The oblique approach was used to good effect in Frederick's victory over the Austrians at the Battle of Leuthen in December 1757.



Charles VI sought to secure the inheritance of the empire for his daughter with the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713



Frederick the Great was one of history's great captains and a deep thinker on military matters

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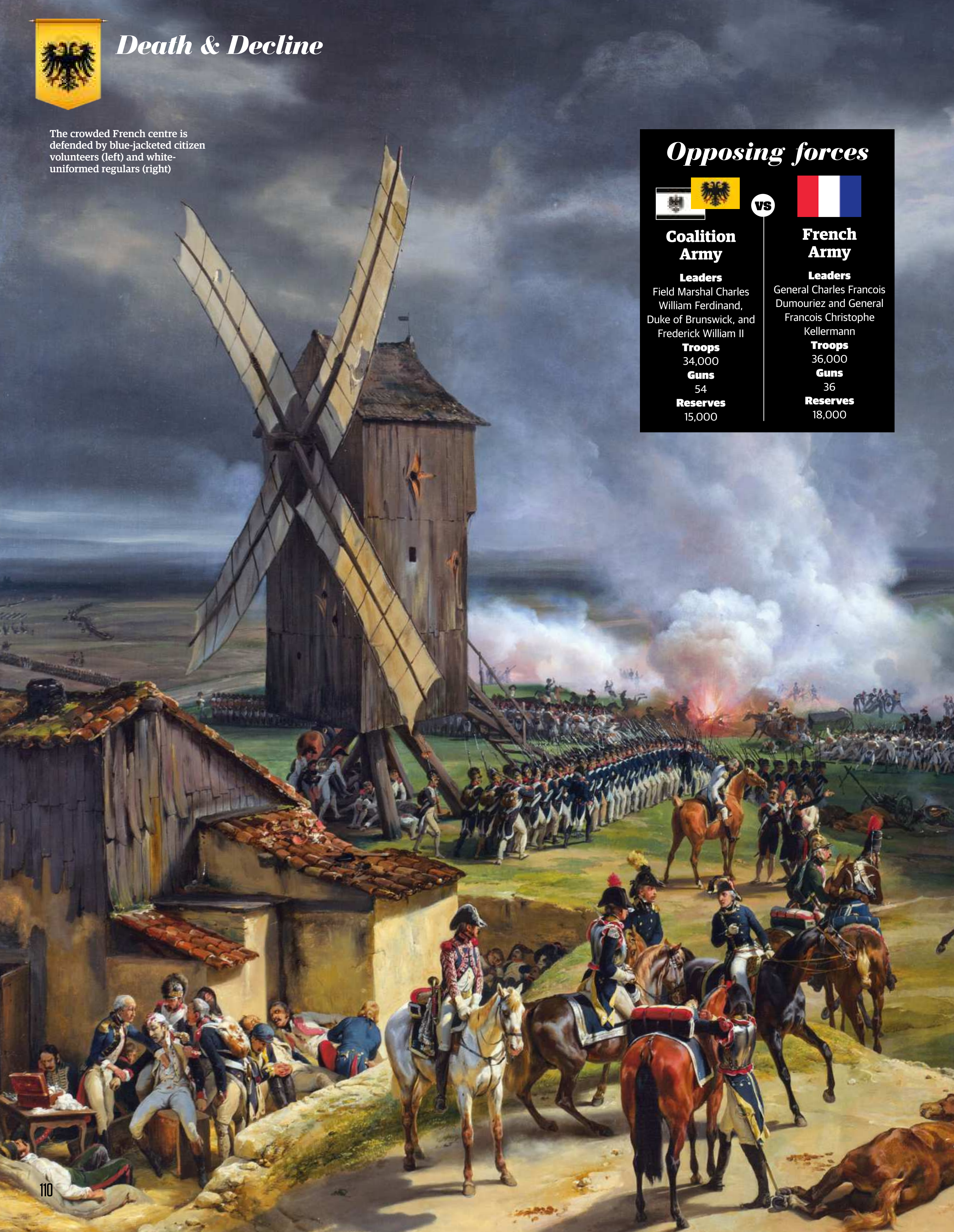
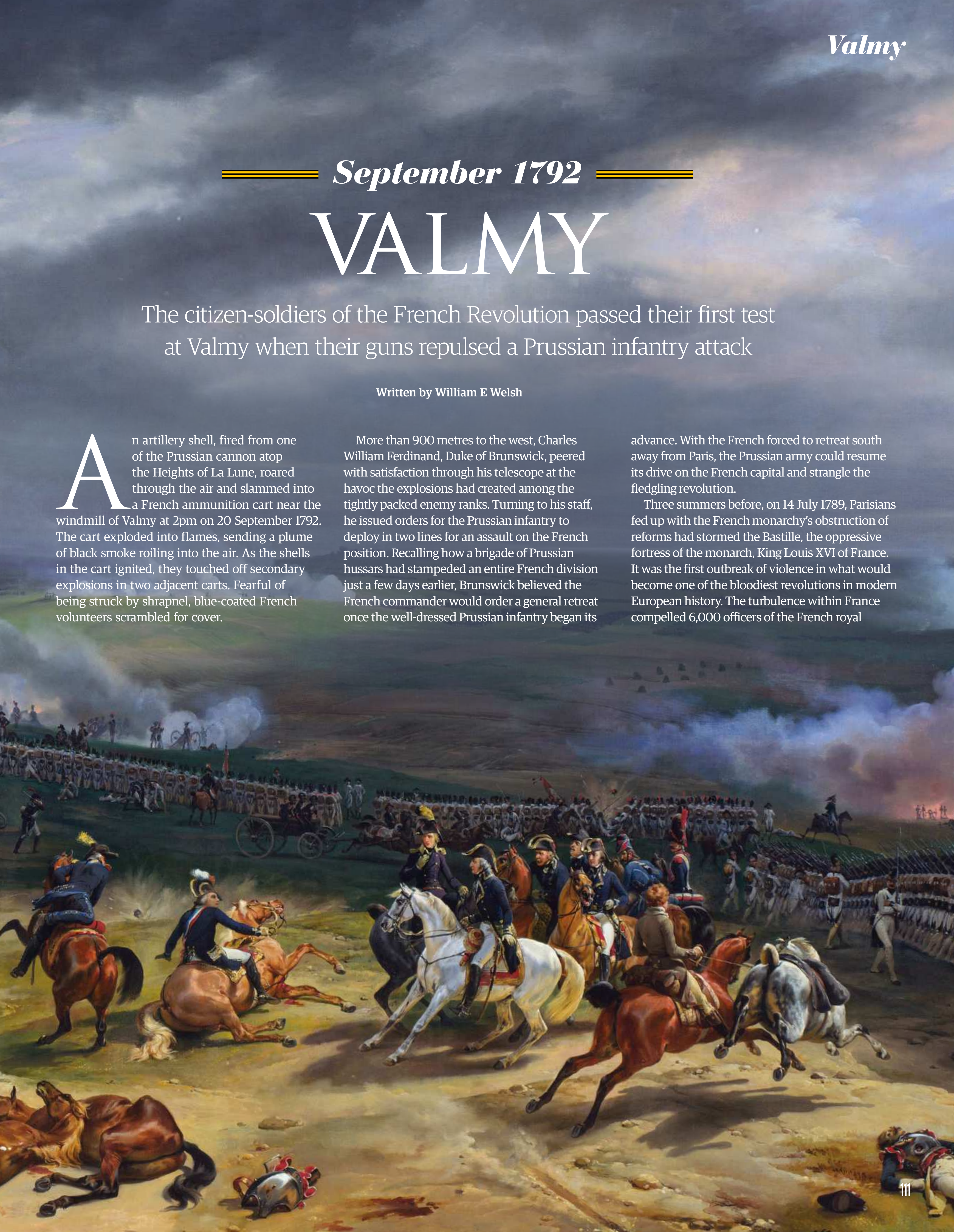


The crowded French centre is defended by blue-jacketed citizen volunteers (left) and white-uniformed regulars (right)

Opposing forces

Coalition Army	**French Army**
Leaders	**Leaders**
Field Marshal Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, and Frederick William II	General Charles Francois Dumouriez and General Francois Christophe Kellermann
Troops	**Troops**
34,000	36,000
Guns	**Guns**
54	36
Reserves	**Reserves**
15,000	18,000



September 1792

VALMY

The citizen-soldiers of the French Revolution passed their first test at Valmy when their guns repulsed a Prussian infantry attack

Written by William E Welsh

An artillery shell, fired from one of the Prussian cannon atop the Heights of La Lune, roared through the air and slammed into a French ammunition cart near the windmill of Valmy at 2pm on 20 September 1792. The cart exploded into flames, sending a plume of black smoke roiling into the air. As the shells in the cart ignited, they touched off secondary explosions in two adjacent carts. Fearful of being struck by shrapnel, blue-coated French volunteers scrambled for cover.

More than 900 metres to the west, Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, peered with satisfaction through his telescope at the havoc the explosions had created among the tightly packed enemy ranks. Turning to his staff, he issued orders for the Prussian infantry to deploy in two lines for an assault on the French position. Recalling how a brigade of Prussian hussars had stampeded an entire French division just a few days earlier, Brunswick believed the French commander would order a general retreat once the well-dressed Prussian infantry began its advance. With the French forced to retreat south away from Paris, the Prussian army could resume its drive on the French capital and strangle the fledgling revolution.

Three summers before, on 14 July 1789, Parisians fed up with the French monarchy's obstruction of reforms had stormed the Bastille, the oppressive fortress of the monarch, King Louis XVI of France. It was the first outbreak of violence in what would become one of the bloodiest revolutions in modern European history. The turbulence within France compelled 6,000 officers of the French royal army to leave the country. Once outside France, the émigrés plotted with sympathetic foreign powers to stamp out the fires of revolution, flames that royal houses across Europe feared would engulf them.

Unable to bear the thought of a limited monarchy, King Louis tried to flee the country in June 1791. He had hoped to reach the Austrian Netherlands, where he would join the émigrés in overthrowing the revolutionaries and restoring the Ancien Régime. He never made it. The fugitive king was apprehended in Lorraine and dragged back to Paris in disgrace.

War loomed on the horizon as 1791 drew to a close. Idealistic men throughout France responded to the assembly's call for volunteers. Prussian King Frederick William II and Austrian King Leopold II agreed between themselves that the best course of action was to invade France, crush the revolutionaries and restore Louis. They formally announced a military alliance in February 1792 that led to the formation of the First Coalition. Two months later, France declared war on Austria. In turn, Prussia, Austria and Savoy positioned forces alongside France's eastern border, where they were joined by the émigrés. If Louis was unable to come to them, they would come to him.

The coalition chose the Duke of Brunswick to lead the Austro-Prussian invasion force. A nephew of Frederick the Great, 56-year-old Brunswick was a cautious commander who believed in fighting a war by manoeuvre rather than sluggish battles. Prussia's King William accompanied the army into France.

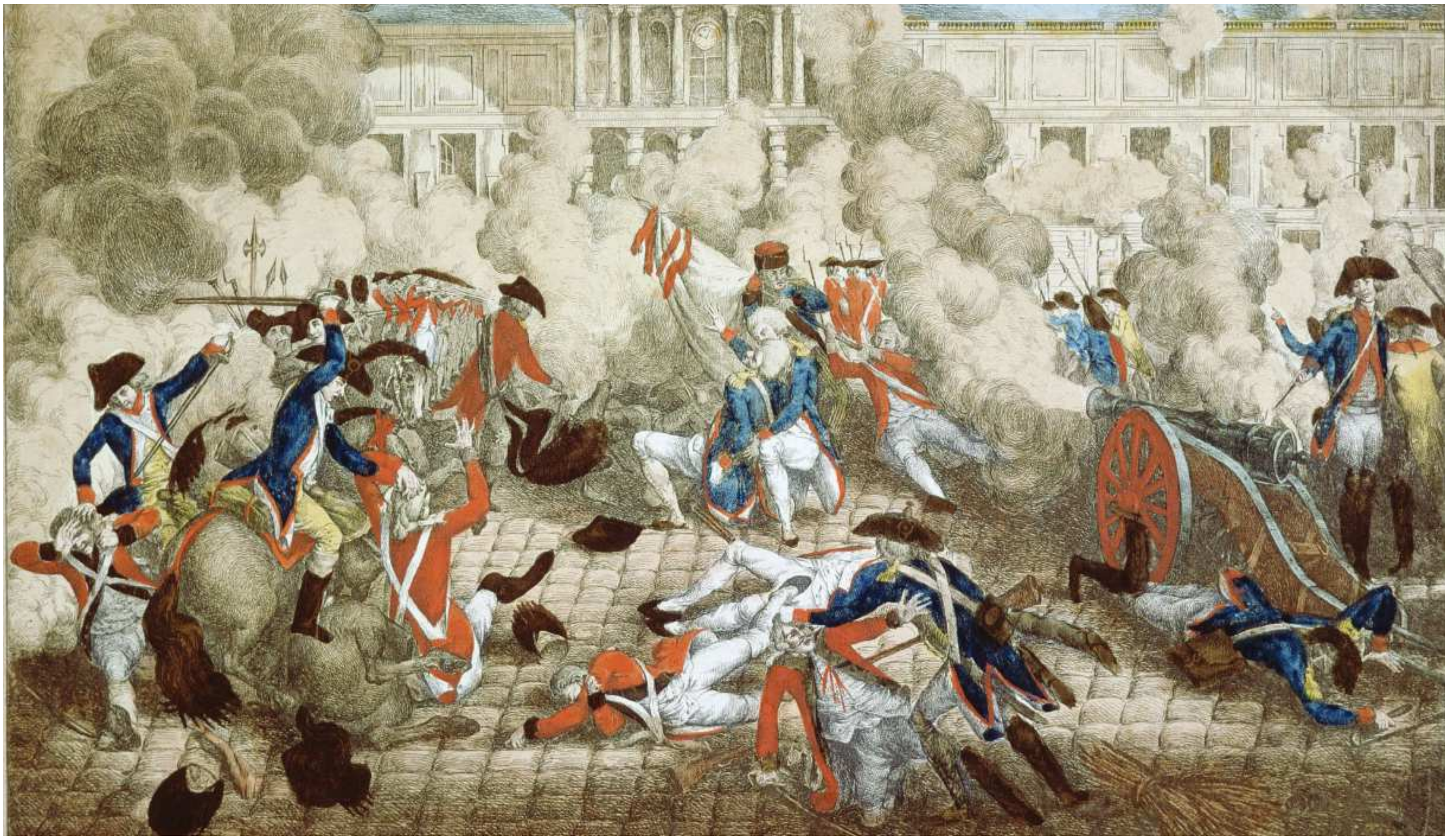
Brunswick's adversary was 53-year-old French general Charles Francois Dumouriez. In August 1792, the French Revolutionary Government appointed Dumouriez and 57-year-old General Francois de Kellermann to command France's Army of the North and Army of the Centre respectively. Both men were brave, self-confident and charismatic. French Minister of War Joseph Marie Servan de Gerbey co-ordinated the movements of both armies from Paris. The challenge facing the French commanders was to meld an army composed of regulars from the old army with volunteers of questionable quality.

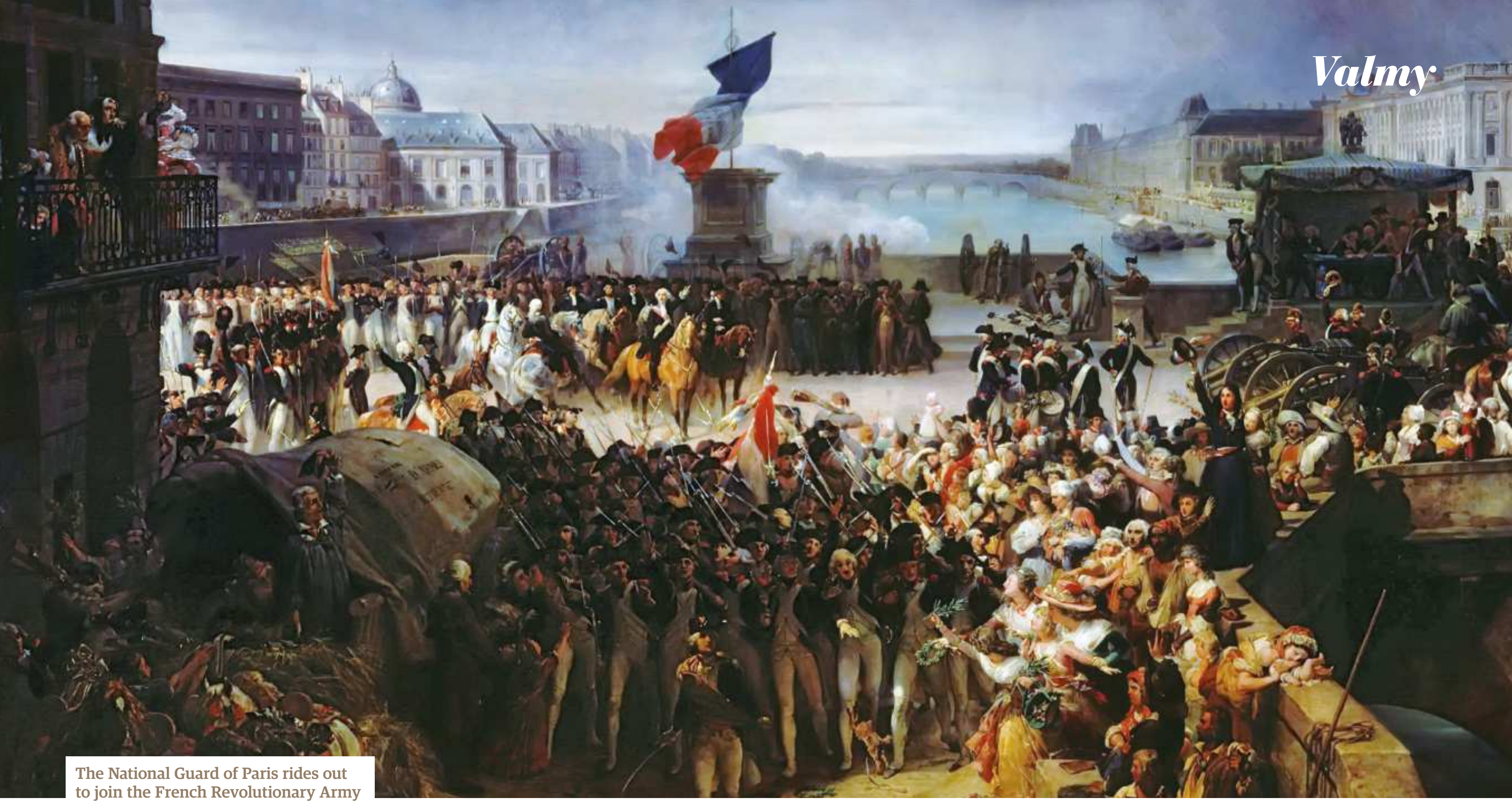
Kellermann found the answer. To enhance the stability of his infantry brigades, he combined one battalion of regulars with two battalions of volunteers. He believed this was the best way to remedy the tendency of the volunteers to panic in combat. The battle that loomed on the horizon would test his new idea.

Although it seemed as if the veteran Prussian army had enormous advantages, this was not the case. First, the Prussians had a flawed logistics system. The cumbersome and ineffective Prussian commissariat hobbled the army throughout the campaign. Second, the Prussian artillery corps was inferior to its French counterpart. The French artillery had instituted sweeping reforms beginning in 1776 under the inspector of artillery Jean-Baptiste Vaquette de Gribeauval. The guns had interchangeable parts and were manufactured on lighter carriages. Due to the prestige associated with serving in the French artillery, the veteran artillerymen had not defected from the army like many of the infantrymen.

Brunswick's plan was for Austrian and Prussian forces to unite in Lorraine and fight their way to Paris. The Prussian main body departed Coblenz on 3 August. Advancing at a snail's pace, the Prussians did not reach the border for almost three weeks. The French border fortresses of Longwy and Verdun were lightly garrisoned, and they fell to the coalition force on 23 August and 3 September respectively.

> *"Continual rain throughout the campaign made the lives of Brunswick's soldiers miserable"*





The National Guard of Paris rides out to join the French Revolutionary Army

The next challenge for Brunswick was to get his army through the woods and swamps of the Argonne Forest. The forest could only be traversed by a large army on five major roads. The Prussian encampment at Verdun lay on the road to Chalons. It passed through the villages of Clermont, Les Islettes and Sainte-Menehould before debauching onto a plateau near Valmy.

Continual rain throughout the campaign made the lives of Brunswick's soldiers miserable. The Prussians remained at Verdun for one week, and the officers made no attempt to ensure that they had proper sanitation. The long delay at Verdun was due in large parts to a disagreement between Brunswick and King William over the next stage of the campaign. Brunswick wanted to postpone a further advance until the following spring when the weather improved. During that time the Prussians would establish forward bases with food and ammunition to support a spring offensive. But King William vetoed Brunswick's plan because he believed that Louis XVI's life was at stake and therefore it was imperative to reach Paris quickly. In the end, the king prevailed.

At the start of the Prussian offensive, Dumouriez was in Valenciennes. He led his troops south to Sedan, arriving in the city on the Meuse River on 28 August. Three days later he received orders from Servan instructing him to intercept Brunswick. To assist Dumouriez with that task, Servan ordered Kellermann, who was based at Metz, to join him as soon as possible.

Advancing on the right and left of the Prussian main body were two smaller armies. Marching on Brunswick's right flank was an Austrian army led by Francois de Croix, Count of Clerfayt, and advancing on his left flank was a Prussian army led by Frederick William, Prince of Hohenlohe-Kirchberg.

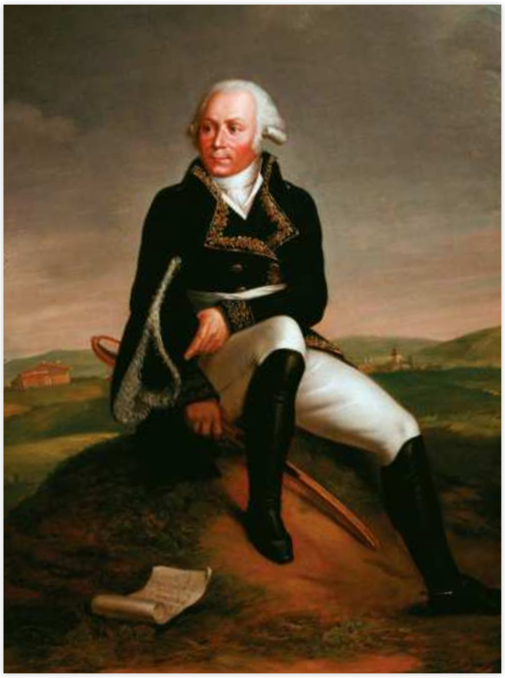
When Clerfayt crossed the Meuse upstream from Sedan at Stenay on 31 August, Dumouriez was forced to fall back west. He marched through the Argonne Forest and took up a position on 4 September at Grandpre, blocking the middle road through the Argonne. Prone to grumbling when things went badly, Brunswick reluctantly led his army north from Verdun on 10 September. The Prussian main body marched a short distance to Landres and halted. This put them directly opposite the French army at Grandpre.

Dumouriez had left a minor detachment at Croix Au Bois on his left flank, which covered the lower of two northern roads through the Argonne. On 12 September, Clerfayt's Austrian hussars scattered the 100 French muskets guarding the defile. A French counter-attack the following day led by General Jean Pierre Chazot failed to retake the pass.

The French main body broke camp on 15 September and headed south towards Sainte-Menehould. Dumouriez had ordered Chazot to follow him. As Chazot's infantry marched through the fields near Moncheutin, Prussian hussars charged them. Caught off guard, the French panicked: "We are betrayed. All is lost," Chazot's men cried as they fled from the Prussian cavalry.

Dumouriez was deploying his forces east of Valmy to await Kellermann when he learned of the rout. He rode north to help round up as many of the demoralised troops as possible. Brunswick, whose army was having a difficult time crossing through the Argonne on muddy roads, did not take advantage of the situation.

Dumouriez's decision to bivouac near Valmy was driven by his need to unite as soon as possible with Kellermann, who had at last arrived on 18 September. Kellermann immediately tied into Dumouriez's left flank, extending it across the Chalons Road. He also sent a blocking force a kilometre west that deployed pickets at the roadside inn of La Lune. Dumouriez, for his part, ordered General Henri Christian Stengel to take up a forward position with a reinforced brigade on Mount Yron directly north of Valmy. The French army was further strengthened by the arrival of General Pierre de Ruel, Marquis of Beurnonville, with a corps that had been guarding Chalons.



Kellermann would go on to be one of the most influential figures in both the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars

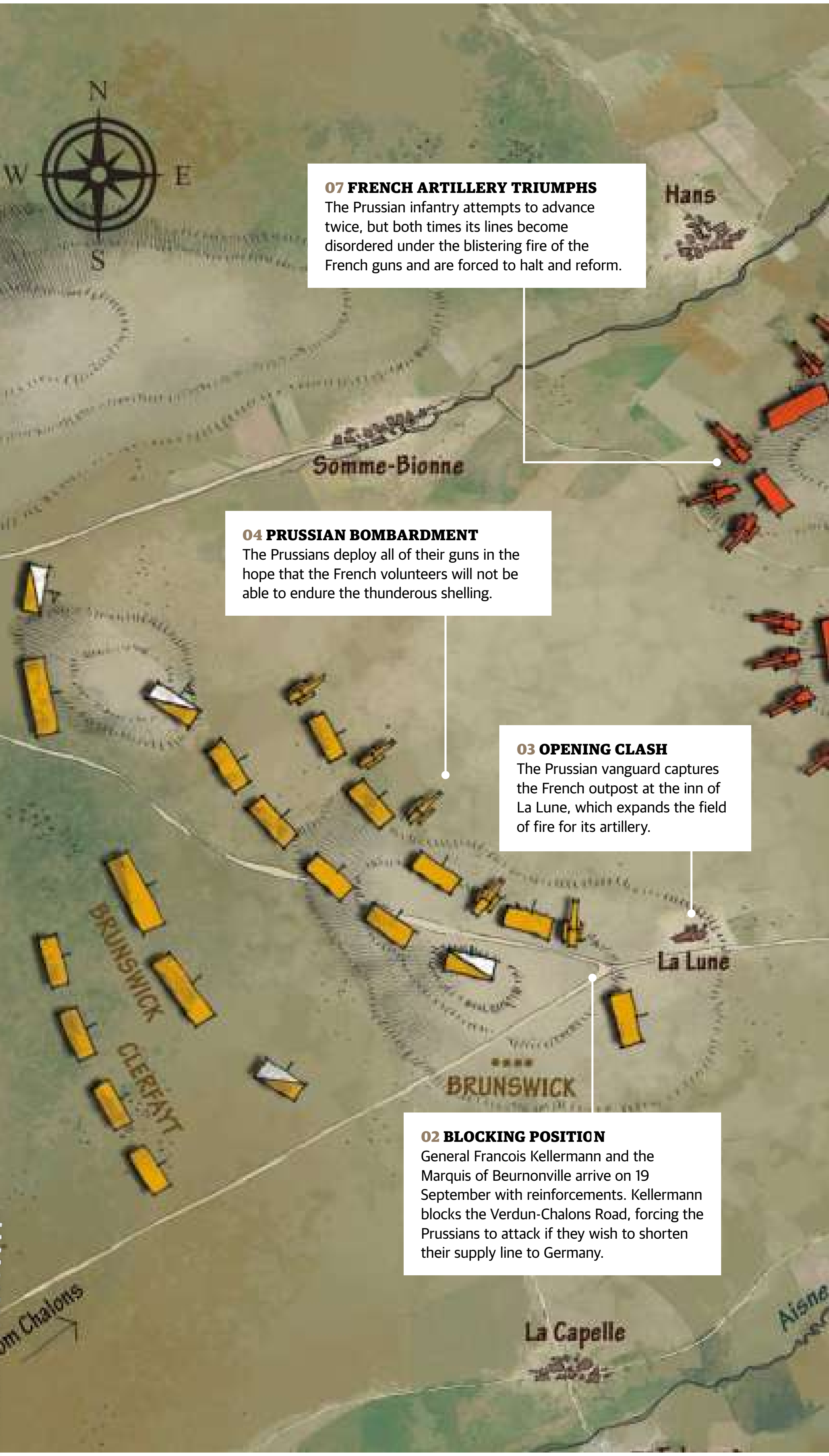
The Prussian main body completed its passage through the Argonne on 18 September. The following day it turned south, and its vanguard had reached Somme-Bionne, which lay less than four kilometres from the French line. As the Prussians concentrated, Dumouriez and Kellermann engaged in a heated conversation about the best placement of Kellermann's units. Dumouriez advised him to deploy on the low hills around Valmy, but Kellermann favoured deploying on the south side of the Auve River. If the Prussians attacked, his men would be in a much better defensive position behind the river, insisted Kellermann. Since Dumouriez was not his superior, Kellermann was free to do as he saw best, so he issued orders for the majority of his troops to cross the Auve in the morning.

A thick fog blanketed the hills and valleys of western Lorraine on the morning of 20 September. The Prince of Hohenlohe, whose troops had joined the Prussian main body, led the advance south at 6am. Hohenlohe's troops were needed for the approaching battle to maintain the fighting strength of the Prussian army. Many of Brunswick's troops had succumbed to dysentery as a result of unsanitary campsites.

A French battery opened fire on the Prussian advanced guard as it pushed south along the Heights of La Lune. Hohenlohe ordered a Prussian battery to engage it. When Kellermann heard the cannonading to his west, he countermanded his order to deploy south of the Auve. He decided the best option was to deploy west of Valmy as Dumouriez had suggested. Because of this, Kellermann's Army of the Centre would bear the brunt of the fighting that day, and Dumouriez would feed reinforcements to him as needed.

Kellermann instructed General Etienne Desprez-Crassier, who commanded the advanced guard of the Army of the Centre, to take up a position on the north side of the Chalons Road at Orbeval, 1.5 kilometres east of La Lune. He ordered General Jean-Baptiste Valence, who commanded the Army of the Centre's reserve, to extend the French line south of the Chalons Road to the Auve River. While these troops were marching to the sound of the firing, at 7am Kellermann led the main body of his army across the fields towards a low hill west of Valmy topped by a windmill. Although the French could hear the Prussians and vice versa, the landscape remained engulfed in fog, which prevented the opposing lines from seeing each other.

Hohenlohe's advanced guard had been reinforced with additional batteries, and he had most of



07 FRENCH ARTILLERY TRIUMPHS
The Prussian infantry attempts to advance twice, but both times its lines become disordered under the blistering fire of the French guns and are forced to halt and reform.

04 PRUSSIAN BOMBARDMENT
The Prussians deploy all of their guns in the hope that the French volunteers will not be able to endure the thunderous shelling.

03 OPENING CLASH
The Prussian vanguard captures the French outpost at the inn of La Lune, which expands the field of fire for its artillery.

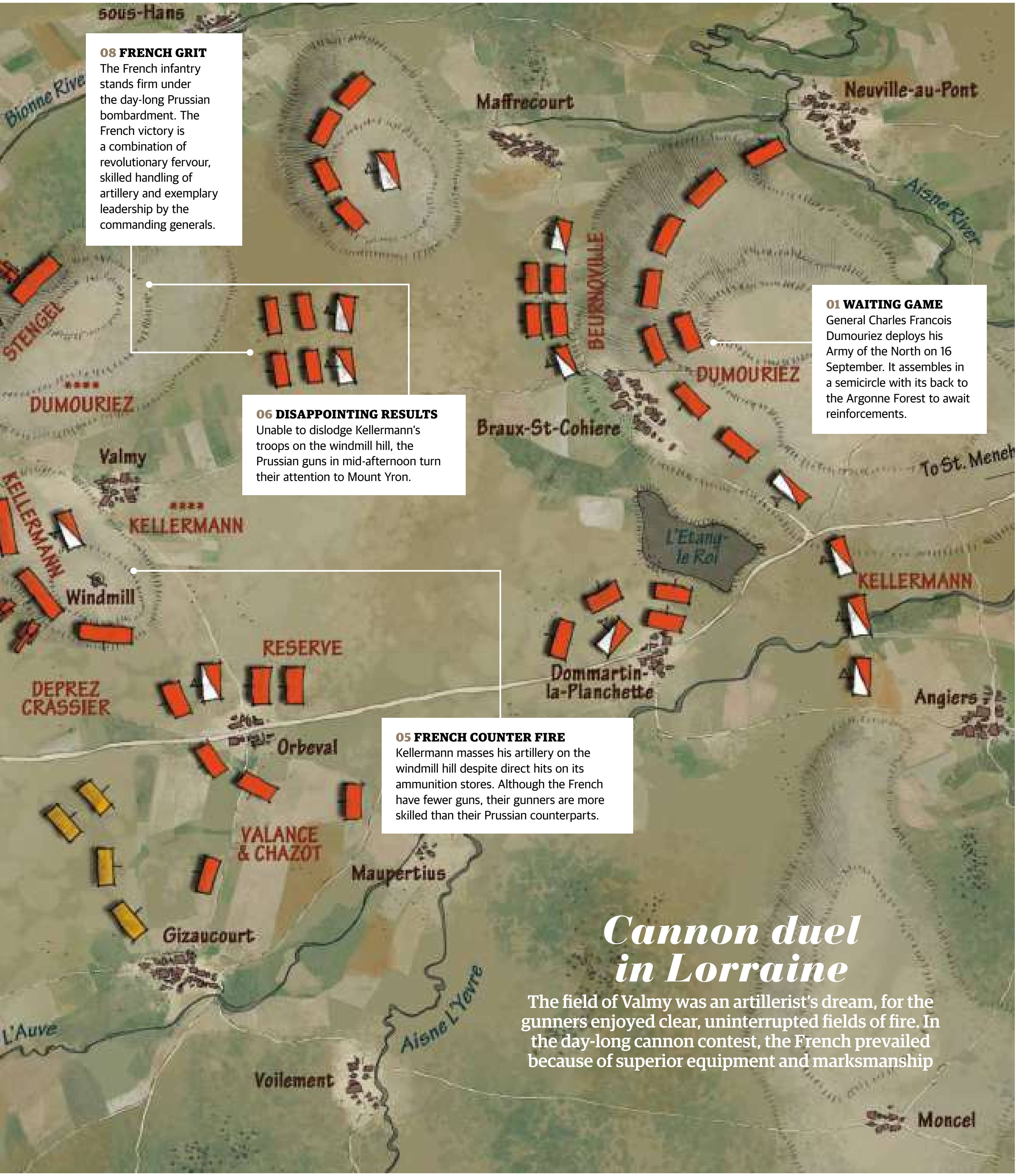
02 BLOCKING POSITION
General Francois Kellermann and the Marquis of Beurnonville arrive on 19 September with reinforcements. Kellermann blocks the Verdun-Chalons Road, forcing the Prussians to attack if they wish to shorten their supply line to Germany.

A French postage stamp commemorating the battle from 1971

REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE
POSTES
0,45
BATAILLE DE VALMY 20 SEPTEMBRE 1792

Cannon duel in Lorraine

The field of Valmy was an artillerist's dream, for the gunners enjoyed clear, uninterrupted fields of fire. In the day-long cannon contest, the French prevailed because of superior equipment and marksmanship


sous-Hans
Bionne River
Maffrecourt
Neuville-au-Pont
Aisne River
BEURNONVILLE
STENGEL
DUMOURIEZ
Braux-St-Cohiere
DUMOURIEZ
To St. Meneh
Valmy
KELLERMANN
KELLERMANN
L'Etang le Roi
KELLERMANN
Windmill
RESERVE
DEPREZ CRASSIER
Dommartin-la-Planchette
Angiers
Orbeval
VALANCE & CHAZOT
Maupertius
Gizaucourt
L'Auve
Aisne L'Yevre
Voilement
Moncel

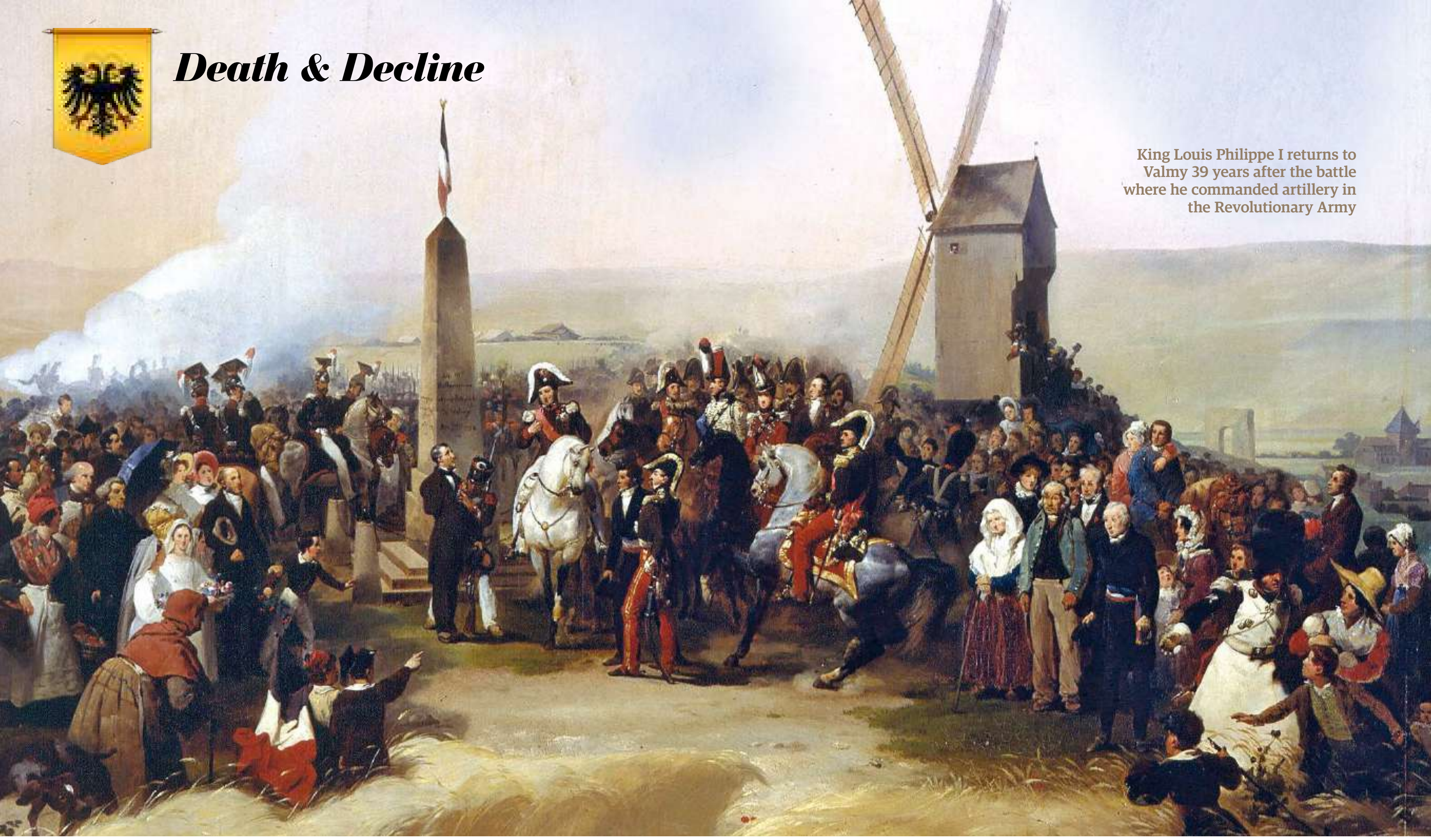
01 WAITING GAME
General Charles Francois Dumouriez deploys his Army of the North on 16 September. It assembles in a semicircle with its back to the Argonne Forest to await reinforcements.

05 FRENCH COUNTER FIRE
Kellermann masses his artillery on the windmill hill despite direct hits on its ammunition stores. Although the French have fewer guns, their gunners are more skilled than their Prussian counterparts.

06 DISAPPOINTING RESULTS
Unable to dislodge Kellermann's troops on the windmill hill, the Prussian guns in mid-afternoon turn their attention to Mount Yron.

08 FRENCH GRIT
The French infantry stands firm under the day-long Prussian bombardment. The French victory is a combination of revolutionary fervour, skilled handling of artillery and exemplary leadership by the commanding generals.

© Rocio Espin



King Louis Philippe I returns to Valmy 39 years after the battle where he commanded artillery in the Revolutionary Army

> *"When the fog burned off later in the day, the battlefield of Valmy would prove itself to be an artillerist's dream"*

the Prussian guns under his direct command that morning. While Prussian and French troops skirmished at La Lune, Hohenlohe ordered six batteries to unlimber their guns on the Heights of La Lune. When the fog burned off later in the day, the battlefield of Valmy would prove itself to be an artillerist's dream. From their positions atop low hills, the artillery crews of both sides would enjoy expansive, virtually uninterrupted fields of fire.

Kellermann had sent as many as two dozen regiments as well as four artillery batteries to deploy on the low rise west of Valmy. The brigade and regimental commanders had their hands full getting the battalions deployed effectively, but the fog helped to conceal the confusion from the Prussians.

Dumouriez was not idle and ordered Chazot to take the equivalent of a division and reinforce the French left flank at Orbeval. He also ordered Beurnonville to take his corps and position it behind Stengel to reinforce it if necessary. "The position was truly grand," Dumouriez wrote in his autobiography. Last, Dumouriez ordered General Alexis Leveneur to advance his division to the right of Stengel and to probe the Prussian left and weigh the possibility of a flank attack against it.

Across the rolling pastures, about 1.2 kilometres to the west, the Prussian forces moved from column to line, taking up a position behind the barking guns. As the Prussians had done throughout the campaign, they deployed in a leisurely fashion with no sense of urgency. Although the fog prevented them from knowing the enemy's strength, they squandered any chance to disrupt Kellermann's deployment. Brunswick arrived with King William at about mid-morning and sent several members of his staff to reconnoitre the French left. Upon their return they recommended that the Prussian guns should be directed at the French left. Once this was done, they believed that it might be possible to roll up the French left flank. The fog began to slowly disperse in the second half of the morning; as it did, it gradually revealed to the Prussians that the key to the French position was the hill on which the windmill stood.

The French troops deployed around La Lune could not withstand the storm of Prussian shells that crashed and exploded all around them and soon withdrew east. Kellermann observed the retreat and ordered Chazot to counter-attack, but the Prussians had strengthened their position at La Lune and Chazot's men were sharply repulsed. By then it was late morning and the fog was almost completely lifted. The Prussian and French batteries, which were a kilometre apart, began a ferocious duel that would last for most of the day.

The weather improved by midday and a damp wind dispersed the last of the fog. The Prussians had thought that the French guns were covering a withdrawal but realised their enemy was offering battle. At that moment, Kellermann raised his hat with its tricolour plume on his sword. "Vive la nation!" he cried. "Vive la nation! Vive la France! Vive Notre general!" his men shouted in response.

Kellermann's bravery inspired his men. "He occupied a dangerous post at the mill of Valmy, at which the fire was principally directed," wrote the then 43-year-old writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who had accompanied the Prussian army as an observer.

With the gunners able to clearly discern their targets, the artillery barrage unleashed by both sides intensified. "In the afternoon, at 1pm, after a pause of some duration, it was at its height; the earth trembled quite in the most literal sense and still we saw not the slightest change in the positions," wrote Goethe. But the damage the cannon balls inflicted was far less than would have been the case in dry weather. The spherical shots normally would have done considerable injury to the troops on the receiving end by ricocheting and rolling, but weeks of rain had turned the clay soil soft, and so the cannonballs buried themselves in the wet ground, "Wherever one fell, it stuck fast," wrote Goethe.

Brunswick and his staff were deeply discouraged that their artillery bombardment had inflicted very little damage on the French infantry in its exposed position on the low hills surrounding Valmy. The Prussian commander believed he had no choice left but to try to rattle the nerves of the untested French volunteers by sending his professional soldiers against them.

"Our troops were burning with the desire of pouncing upon the French, officers as well as men glowed with the anticipation that the general would instantly make the attack; our impetuous advance, too, seeming to indicate that such was his intention," wrote Goethe.

The Prussian infantry formed itself into two long rows for its advance. It had only marched 200 yards before it began to take a brutal pounding from the guns manned by the expert French gunners. Brunswick quickly called a halt to the advance to rethink the situation.

When the Prussians began their advance, Dumouriez rode to the front to consult with Kellermann. He believed that Brunswick would break off the attack rather than have his infantry decimated by walking into the teeth of the French guns. Even so, the Prussian guns scored a clear success when one of their shells detonated a French ammunition cart. The explosions, which rocked the windmill hill, produced large clouds of smoke that temporarily obscured targets in the French centre for the Prussian gunners. When two volunteer battalions broke for cover, Kellermann rode quickly to rally them before the panic spread to other battalions. In the meantime, Dumouriez issued orders for more guns and replacement ammunition to be brought forward to replace the shells that had been lost.

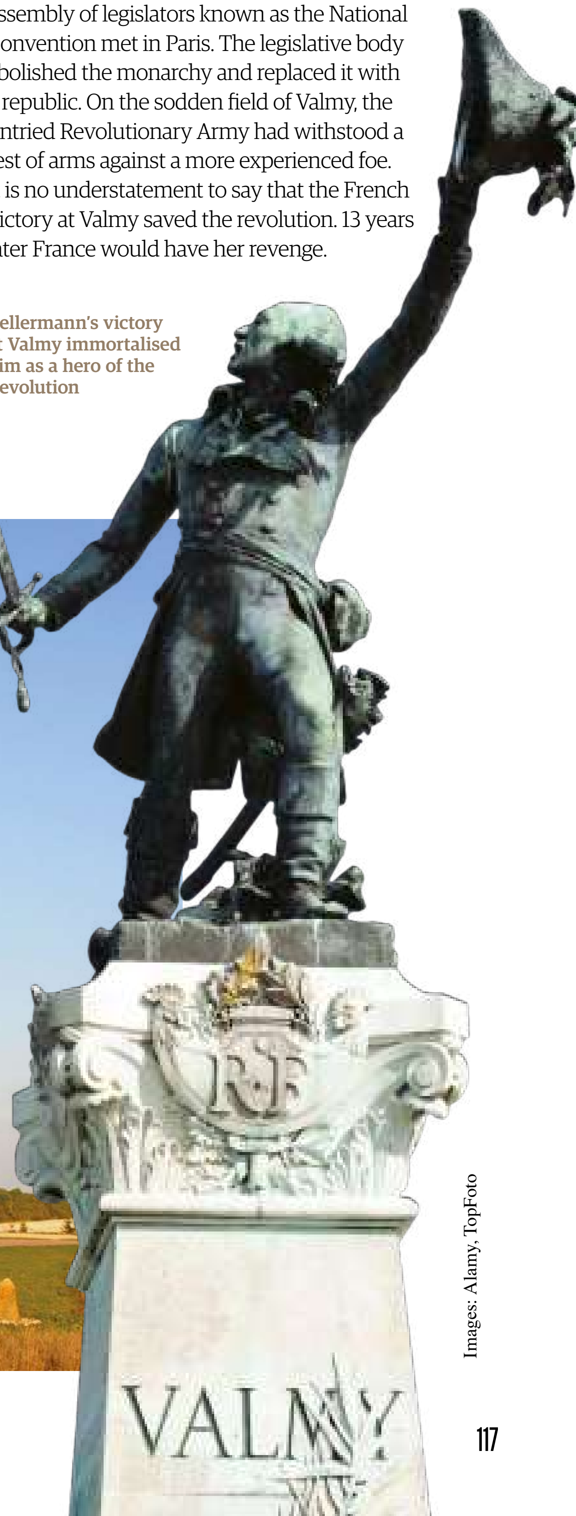
Christian Karl August Ludwig von Massenbach, who was the military engineer on Brunswick's staff, had been observing the progress of the battle from La Lune. He wrongly assumed that the French morale had been broken by the explosions and rode to Brunswick to urge him to send the infantry forward again. At that moment the smoke from the detonations dissipated, and the French artillery resumed its heavy fire. Having failed to break the French centre, Brunswick ordered the Prussian artillery to try to drive Stengel from Mount Yron instead, but Stengel's troops also held up under the concentrated artillery fire.

Knowing that King William wanted desperately to defeat the French, Brunswick ordered the infantry to advance again at mid-afternoon, but the result was the same. The French guns laid down a deadly barrage that forced the Prussians to halt their advance. At 4pm Brunswick called his staff together and, with the king listening, plucked up the courage to say emphatically that the Prussians would not launch a potentially costly frontal assault. "We do not fight here," he told those assembled. The king did not object. Brunswick's last order of the day was for the Prussians on the right to extend their line in order to cut the Chalons Road so that the French could not withdraw east.

That night, the group of soldiers that camped with Goethe asked him to share his thoughts on the battle. His reply was typically eloquent: "From this place and from this day forth commences a new era in the world's history, and you can all say that you were present at its birth," he said, commenting on the significance of the French victory.

Inclement weather and additional losses in the ranks due to camp sickness compelled Brunswick to order a general retreat on 30 September. Casualties on both sides were light because the bulk of the infantry had never been committed and the artillery fire was less destructive than normal given the wet conditions. The French suffered approximately 300 casualties and the Prussians approximately 200.

The 'Cannonade at Valmy' was momentous for the French. The day after the battle, a more radical assembly of legislators known as the National Convention met in Paris. The legislative body abolished the monarchy and replaced it with a republic. On the sodden field of Valmy, the untried Revolutionary Army had withstood a test of arms against a more experienced foe. It is no understatement to say that the French victory at Valmy saved the revolution. 13 years later France would have her revenge.

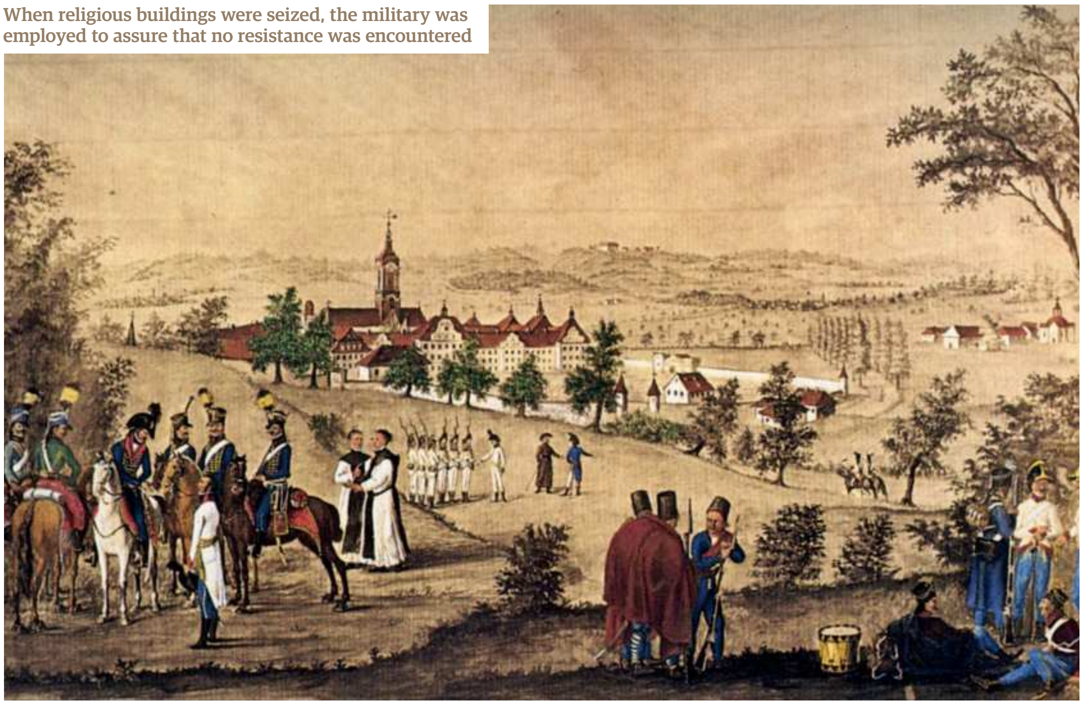


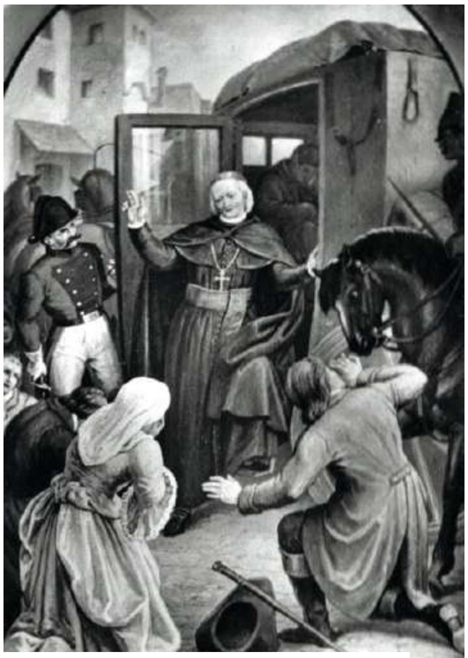
Kellermann's victory at Valmy immortalised him as a hero of the Revolution

A reconstruction of the windmill near Valmy is today a key landmark of the battlefield

Images: Alamy, TopFoto

When religious buildings were seized, the military was employed to assure that no resistance was encountered





Once-powerful religious leaders were removed and their lands occupied and secularised

1803

THE IMPERIAL RECESS OF 1803

Faced with the seemingly unstoppable rise of Napoleonic France, the once-mighty Holy Roman Empire prepared its final bow

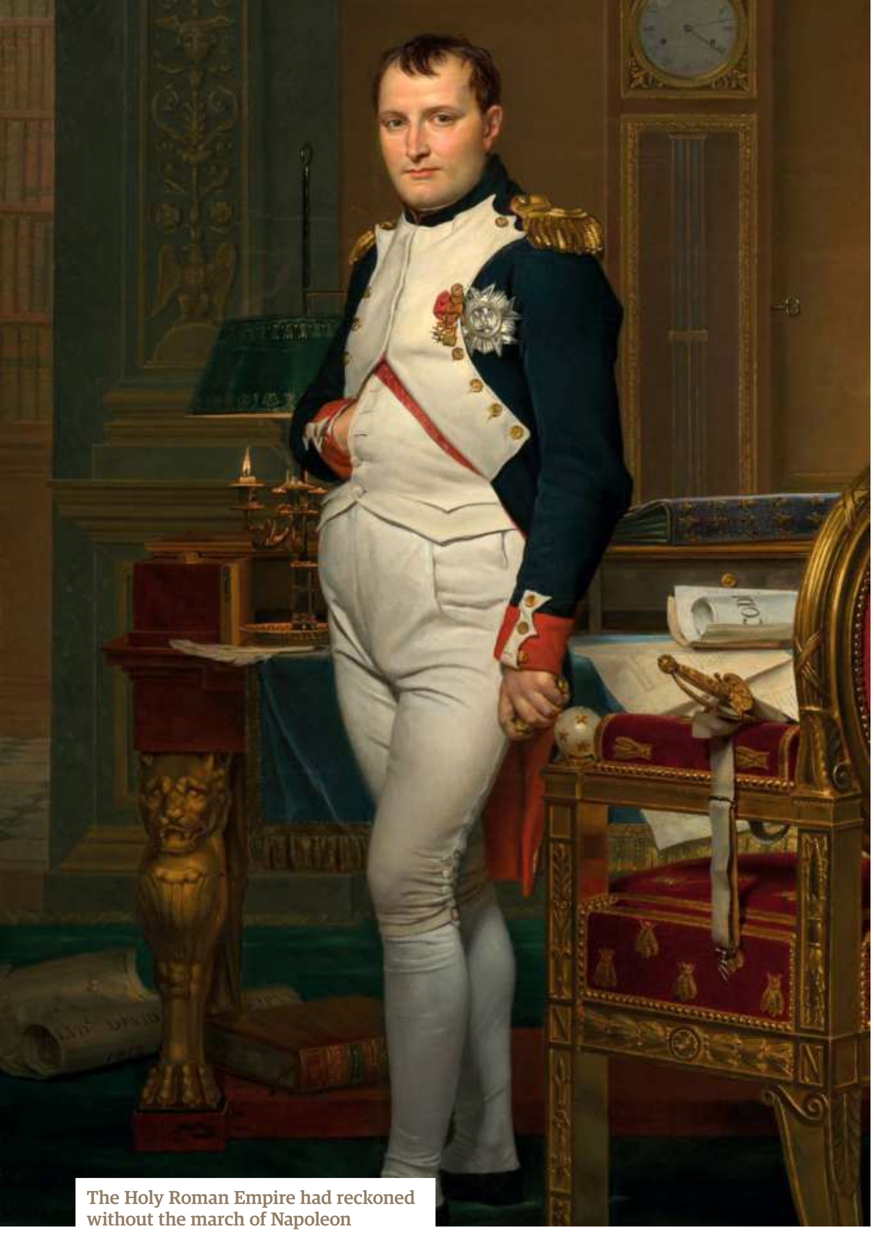
Written by Catherine Curzon

On 25 February 1803, an Imperial Delegation of the Holy Roman Empire passed a decree known as the Reichsdeputationshauptschluss, or Final Imperial Recess. This decree was approved by the Reichstag a month later with the official confirmation of Emperor Francis II and formally recognised the sweeping restructure of the lands of the Holy Roman Empire. It was the last important decree enacted by the once-mighty empire before its final slide into dissolution.

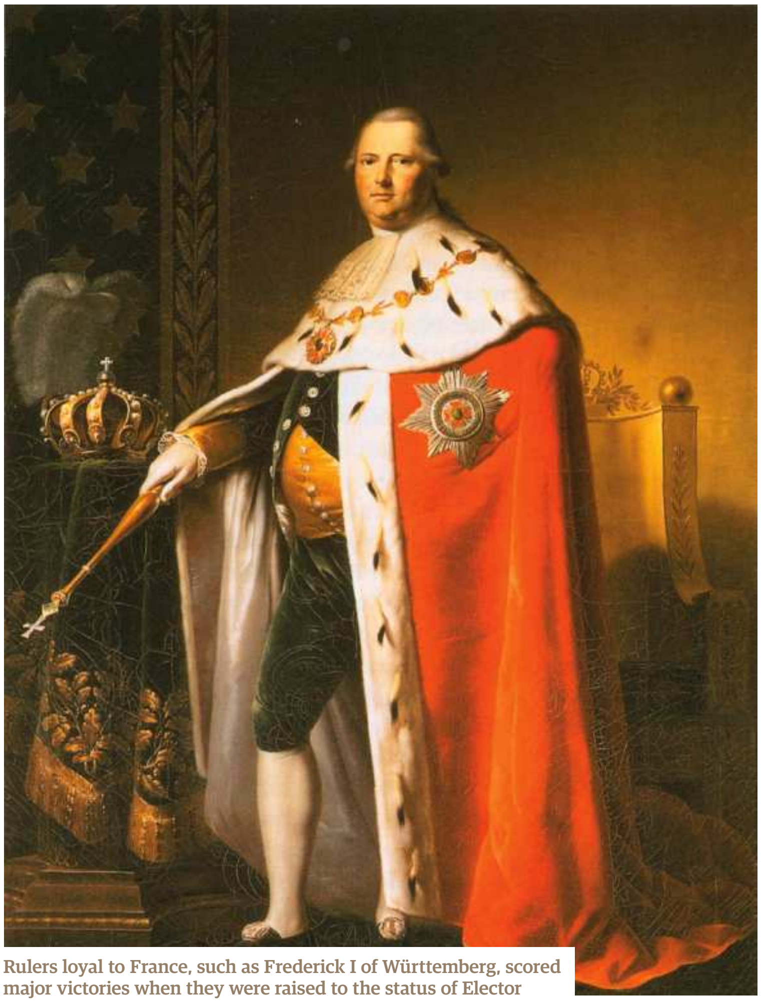
The Imperial Recess came in the wake of Napoleon's aggressive campaign in Europe. Embattled by the French and forced to capitulate following a disastrous defeat at Marengo in 1800, Francis II had no choice but to accept the terms of the humbling Treaty of Lunéville. The treaty handed control of the left bank of the Rhine to France and effectively neutered Austrian power. It also meant that Austrian lands on the left bank passed into French hands. Their leaders swiftly demanded compensation for the loss of the status, territory and property they had enjoyed as a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

The task of organising this compensation fell to Emperor Francis II and the Imperial Diet, with France overseeing the process with a hawkish eye. As Francis struggled to give the disenfranchised envoys who flocked to him what they wanted, in France the Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord was happy to take bribes from those who could afford it, while smaller regions were left to languish and await their fate. France was content to encourage rivalries between the states, ensuring that compromise was the last thing on anyone's mind. When they had divided they moved in to conquer, putting together a compensation plan that was intended to placate and secure the loyalty of the most senior German princes while also ensuring that the empire's remaining powers were fragmented and split.

Though ostensibly the Imperial Deputation had the right to discuss these plans, this was really only a matter of formality. Before they had even convened, France had taken control and begun to carve up the most valuable territories, even formalising some of the decisions with the Franco-Prussian Agreement in 1802. The more powerful electors who had received new territories in the agreement began occupying these lands before Francis had so much as picked up his pen.



The Holy Roman Empire had reckoned without the march of Napoleon



Rulers loyal to France, such as Frederick I of Württemberg, scored major victories when they were raised to the status of Elector

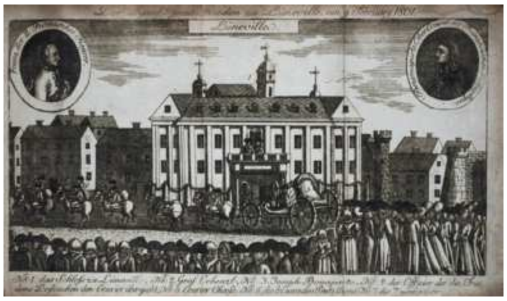
> *"France had taken control and begun to carve up the most valuable territories"*

By late 1802, the Deputation was deep into its discussions of the compensation plans. The final, amended plan that would become the Imperial Recess was submitted in February 1803. It was approved by the Imperial Diet a month later and confirmed by Emperor Francis II on 27 April. He accepted the newly established College of Electors, which, for the first time in history, was predominantly Protestant, but he opposed the similar Protestant domination of the new College of Princes. On this point Francis wouldn't be swayed. His resistance was to no avail, however, and he was still pushing for a redress of the religious balance when the Holy Roman Empire fell in 1806.

The Final Recess laid down the financial and administrative duties of the newly installed rulers of each territory, all of which were favourable to French interests. It also emphasised the secularisation of the newly drawn territories and imperial cities, once centres of ecclesiastic power. With the exception of a very small number, any ecclesiastical principalities were completely abolished in the Imperial Recess and ecclesiastic lands were secularised, with Church properties seized and redistributed as part of the compensation package. Even secular imperial knights and counts, whose territories should have been safe, found their lands occupied and claimed by the powerful rulers of Bavaria: Hesse-Kassel and Württemberg. Though the emperor opposed these occupations, his depleted influence meant that the disenfranchised leaders received no redress.

In the event, over 100 imperial territories ceased to exist, and the 3 million people who lived in them became political pawns. Some of these lands were handed directly to France, others used as compensation for the princes who had been successful in their claims. The once-powerful Catholic Church was reduced to a minor player, its vast and wealthy lands and buildings redistributed to secular leaders for the benefit of French interests.

The Imperial Recess guaranteed the religious freedom of the people, removed power from ecclesiastical rulers and placed it in the hands of territorial leaders, some of whom were brand-new and handpicked by France. What it didn't do was dissolve the Holy Roman Empire completely. This would take three more years to achieve, but in the humbling terms of the Recess, the foundations were laid for the end.



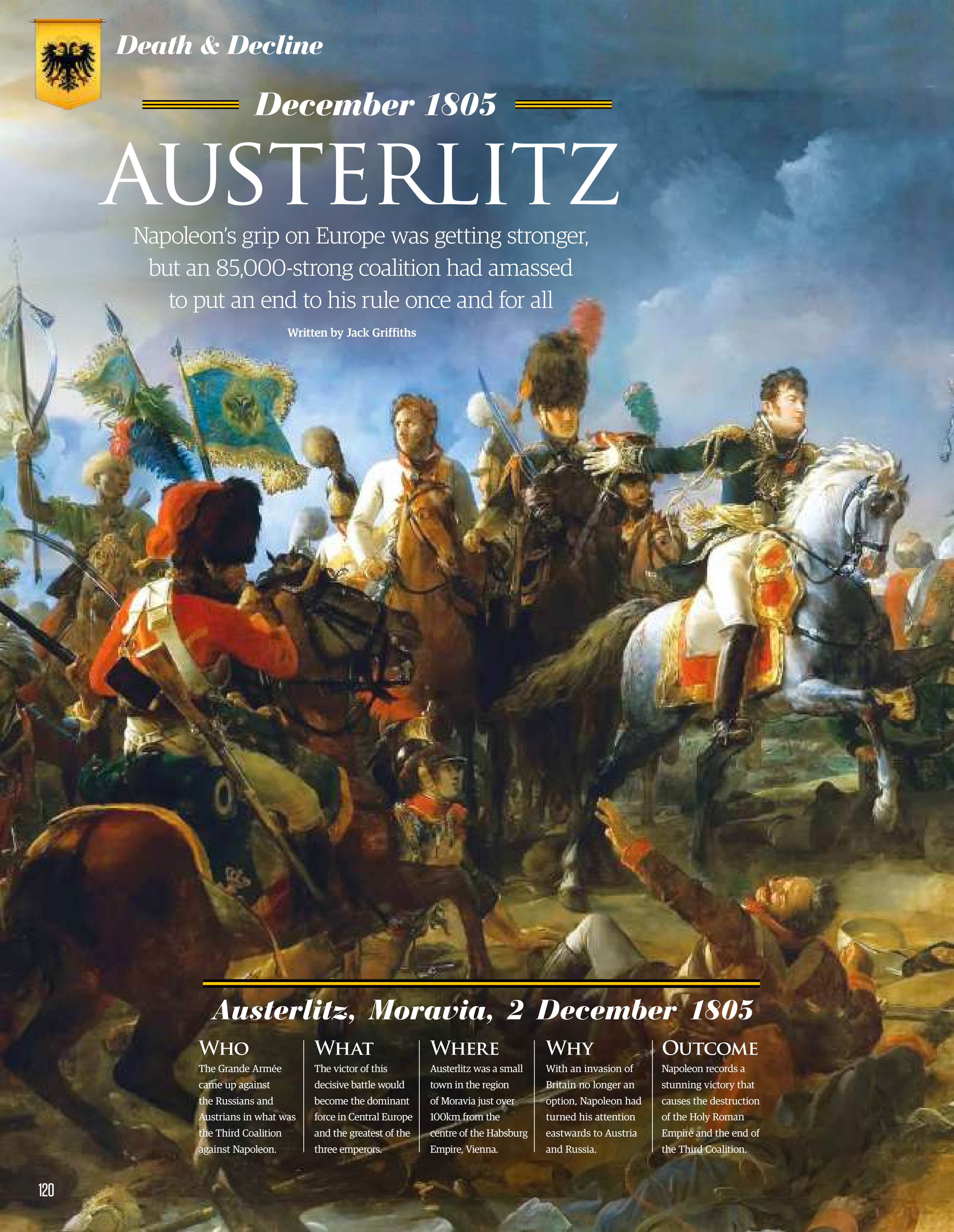
The Treaty of Lunéville laid the foundations for the final act of the Holy Roman Empire

December 1805

AUSTERLITZ

Napoleon's grip on Europe was getting stronger, but an 85,000-strong coalition had amassed to put an end to his rule once and for all

Written by Jack Griffiths



Austerlitz, Moravia, 2 December 1805

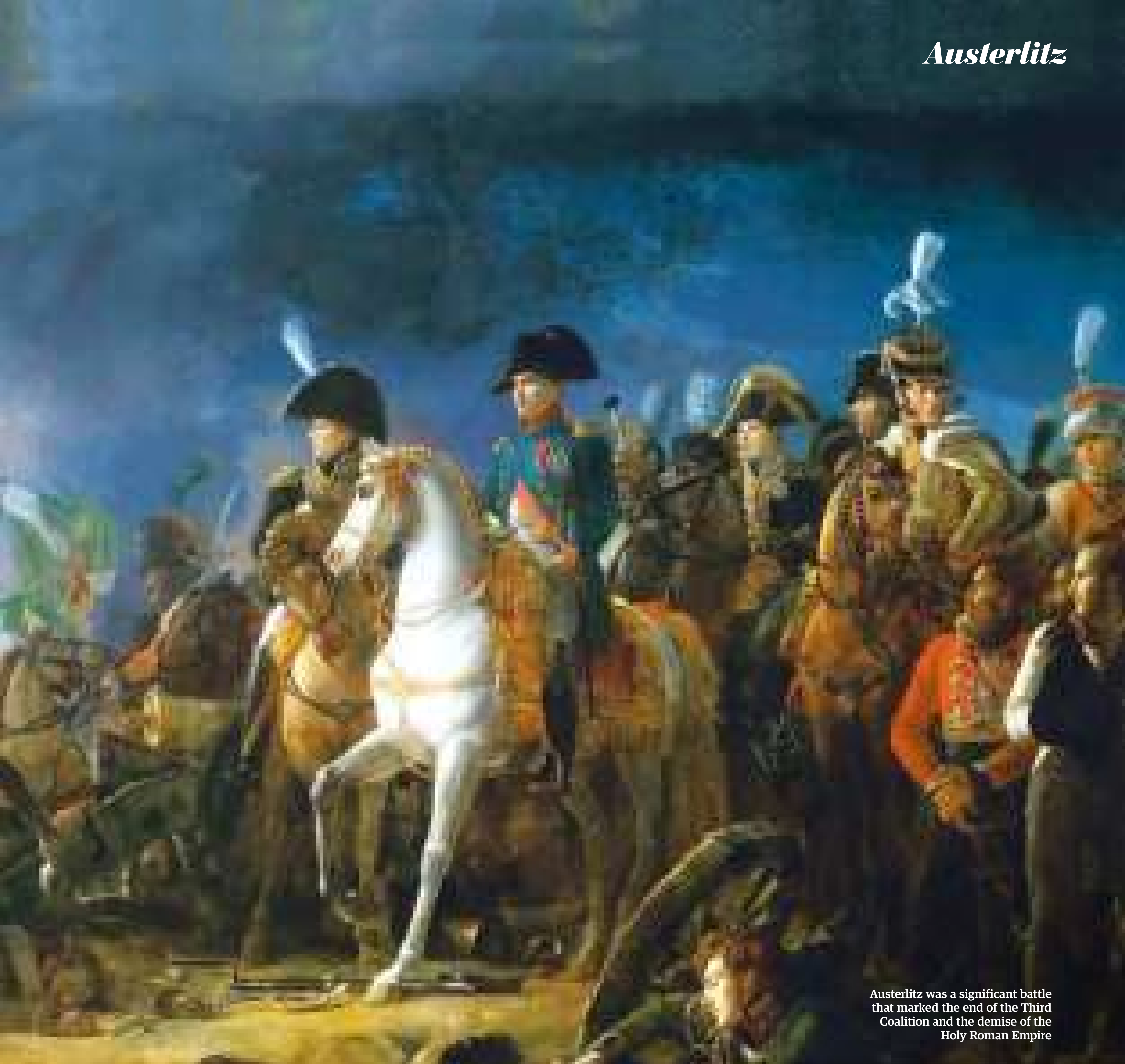
WHO
The Grande Armée came up against the Russians and Austrians in what was the Third Coalition against Napoleon.

WHAT
The victor of this decisive battle would become the dominant force in Central Europe and the greatest of the three emperors.

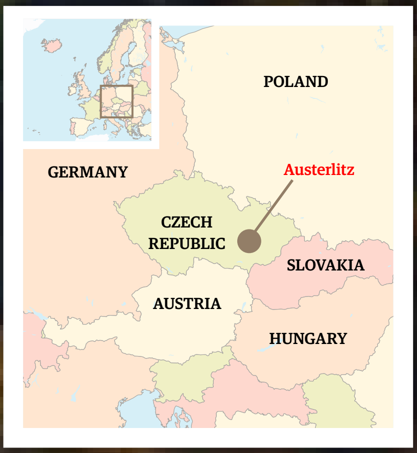
WHERE
Austerlitz was a small town in the region of Moravia just over 100km from the centre of the Habsburg Empire, Vienna.

WHY
With an invasion of Britain no longer an option, Napoleon had turned his attention eastwards to Austria and Russia.

OUTCOME
Napoleon records a stunning victory that causes the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire and the end of the Third Coalition.



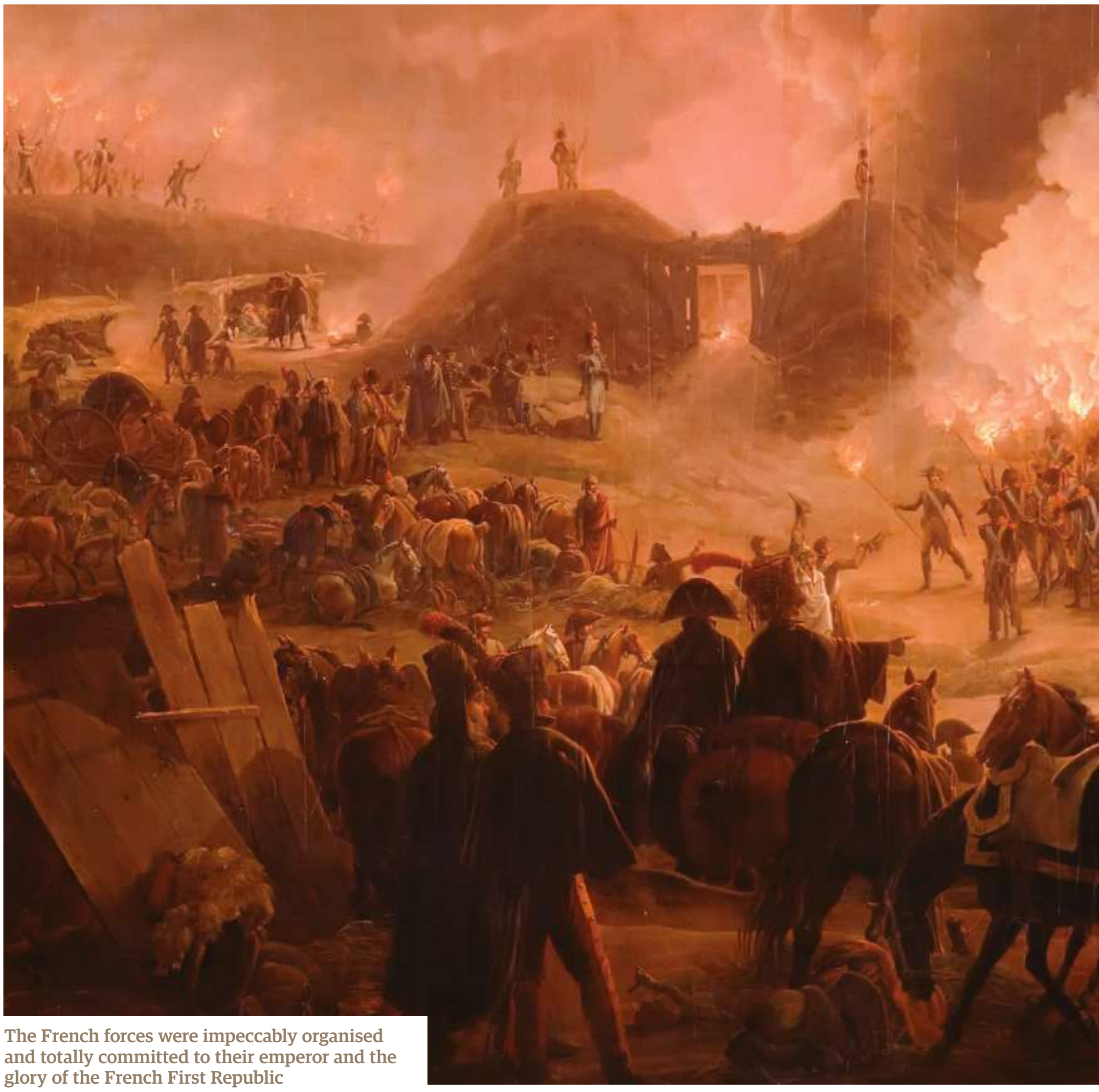
Austerlitz was a significant battle that marked the end of the Third Coalition and the demise of the Holy Roman Empire


POLAND
GERMANY
Austerlitz
CZECH REPUBLIC
SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY

Freevectormaps.com; Corbis

Ever since the turn of the 19th century, Western Europe had been a battleground. The empires of old had been struggling against a reinvigorated French First Republic, and by 1803 a Third Coalition had been created to oppose Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Originally, the French had wanted to invade Britain, but their loss to the Royal Navy at Trafalgar and the subsequent Treaty of Amiens meant Napoleon began to cast his eyes eastwards. Having already secured Spain as an ally, the two powers that stood in the way were the Habsburg monarchy and what remained of an ailing Holy Roman Empire, plus the mighty Russian Empire. With the latter two led by Francis II and Tsar Alexander respectively, the coming war was to be fought between three emperors.

Napoleon was a shrewd tactician, with the loyal and resolute Grande Armée at his disposal. His strategic nous was evident as soon as the war began in September 1805, as French troops scored victories against the Austrian army at Ulm and Munich. There was seemingly no stopping the Grande Armée, which had crossed the Rhine and emphatically swept across the continent. This was followed by the quick capture of Vienna in November of that year. Vienna was the capital and centre of the Habsburg Empire, and its swift occupation shocked the major powers. There had to be a response, and it came near the town of Austerlitz in the kingdom of Moravia. Would Napoleon be too strong, or would the old armies of the European kingdoms triumph?



The French forces were impeccably organised and totally committed to their emperor and the glory of the French First Republic

The Battle Plan

The battle took place atop the Pratzen Heights. It was foggy on the morning of 1 December, as vast regiments from three armies amassed and awaited orders from above. The Russians stood in the winter cold, confident that the excellent artillery within their ranks would dismantle the French regiments. The Austrian cavalry, armed with their cold steel, were considered among the best mounted troops in the world. In total, the Coalition numbered 85,000 Russians and Austrians.

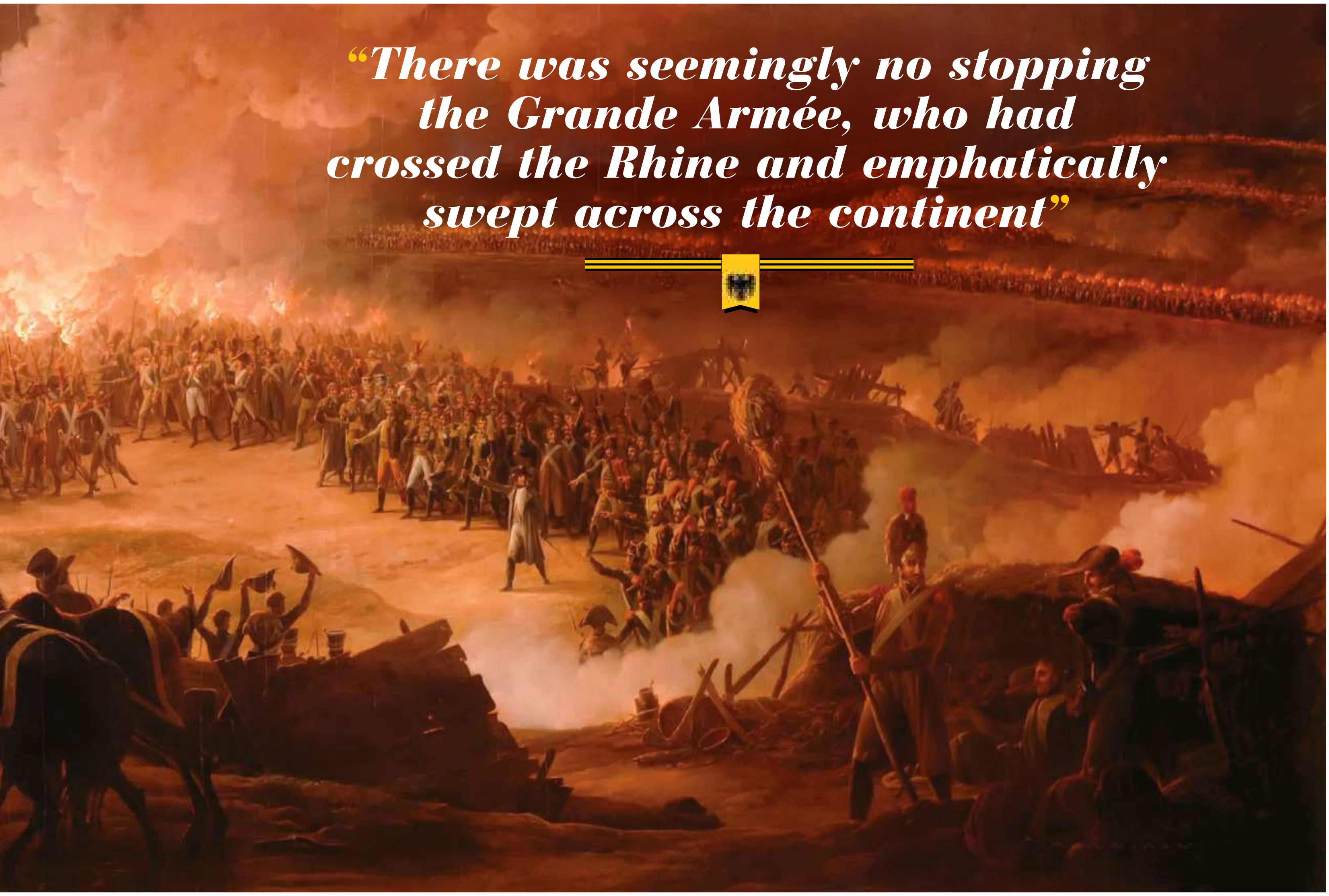
The generals were confident of stopping the French advance and had outlined a plan devised by Austrian Chief of Staff General Weyrother. The strategy was designed to target the French right flank in an attempt to force them southwards and open up a path to retake Vienna. Russian General von Buxhoevden, who would be joined on the opposite side by General Bagration, would lead this advance. The centre would be held in reserve to keep the flanks steady. In charge of all the Allied operations was Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov, but he was soon brushed aside in favour of the direct leadership of Tsar Alexander I, who was hungry for an all-out assault to finally crush the formidable Grande Armée.

The Austrians and Kutuzov were willing to wait and force Napoleon's hand, but Alexander was far too reckless to even consider this approach. The emperor would rather listen to his own desires than the Commander-in-Chief, and besides, the Austrians were not to be trusted after their capitulation at the Battle of Ulm a few months prior, a defeat that cost over 30,000 casualties.

Napoleon, meanwhile, had a strategy of his own. After having failed to prevent the two Russian armies linking up, Austerlitz now became the location of the French army's stand. The right side of his forces, which the Coalition saw as a potential fragile point, was falsely weakened by the emperor to draw the Allied troops in. If General Legrand's IV Corps could hold the Russians and Austrians here,

Napoleon's artillery divisions favoured light cannons and howitzers that were part of the Gribeauval or Year XI artillery system

"The Austrian cavalry, armed with cold steel, were considered among the best mounted troops in the world"



> *"There was seemingly no stopping the Grande Armée, who had crossed the Rhine and emphatically swept across the continent"*

the soft underbelly in the centre of the Coalition was there for the taking.

Napoleon, a self-made general, even rode with his troops into the heat of battle – a very different approach to the old-style Austrian and Russian emperors. The French numbered 73,000, as they lacked the VIII Corps, which remained posted in Vienna, the II Corps, who were watching the Alps, and the VI Corps, stationed in Carinthia. Shrewdly, Napoleon sent his aide, Anne Jean Marie René Savary, to negotiate an armistice and deceive the Allies into thinking that the French lacked confidence. While this was happening, Napoleon's soldiers organised and equipped themselves.

Napoleon based his army on organisation and professionalism, and his popularity was at an all-time high with the French troops, who were at the peak of their morale, this battle being on the anniversary of the emperor's coronation. This boosted the Grande Armée, which was on the point of exhaustion after a long campaign through Central Europe.

The Third Coalition was aware of the French fatigue, but it had problems of its own. The Allied force was 70 per cent Russian and 30 per cent Austrian, so many of the orders given out had to be translated back and forth between two languages, which made it difficult to execute any complex orders quickly. However, they were pinning their hopes on reinforcements from both Archduke Ferdinand Karl Joseph to the northwest and archdukes Charles and John from Italy to the south. They would be enhanced further by 4,000 Austrians and 12,000 Russians already on their way to the battlefield, a force due to arrive in the next few days. If the battle could be delayed, the Coalition's numbers would increase dramatically. However, this didn't occur to Alexander: he would defeat Napoleon there and then.

The Battle Begins

Overnight the weather had remained foggy, which hid the French deployment. Just before 7am on 2 December, the Allies spied what looked like a panicked retreat by the French from the Pratzen Heights. In line with their initial strategy, 40,000 Russian troops moved south towards Napoleon's right wing as it hurried from the heights.

Over the ridge, 10,500 French lay in wait. Fighting soon began across the Goldbach stream

Opposing forces

LEADERS
Napoleon I, Claude Legrand, Louis Alexandre Berthier

REGIMENTS
Imperial Guard, I Corps, III Corps, IV Corps, V Corps, Heavy cavalry and dragoon reserves

ARTILLERY
139 guns

GAME-CHANGERS
The Grande Armée was battle-hardened, organised and willing to die for the emperor on the anniversary of his coronation

LEADERS
Alexander I, Francis II, Mikhail Kutusov

REGIMENTS
Imperial Guard, 2x Advance Guard, First Column, Second Column, Third Column, Fourth Column (All Russian), 3rd Austrian Infantry Brigade, Fifth Column (Austrian)

ARTILLERY
278 guns

GAME-CHANGERS
The power of the Russian artillery was vastly superior to anything the French could muster

near the village of Telnitz. The Goldbach would act as the dividing line between the opposing forces. The Russians and Austrians held the ascendancy in the battle's initial exchanges, and initially their strategy was going to plan. But their progress was checked in the village, where the late arrival of the French III Corps had swung the pendulum back in Napoleon's favour.

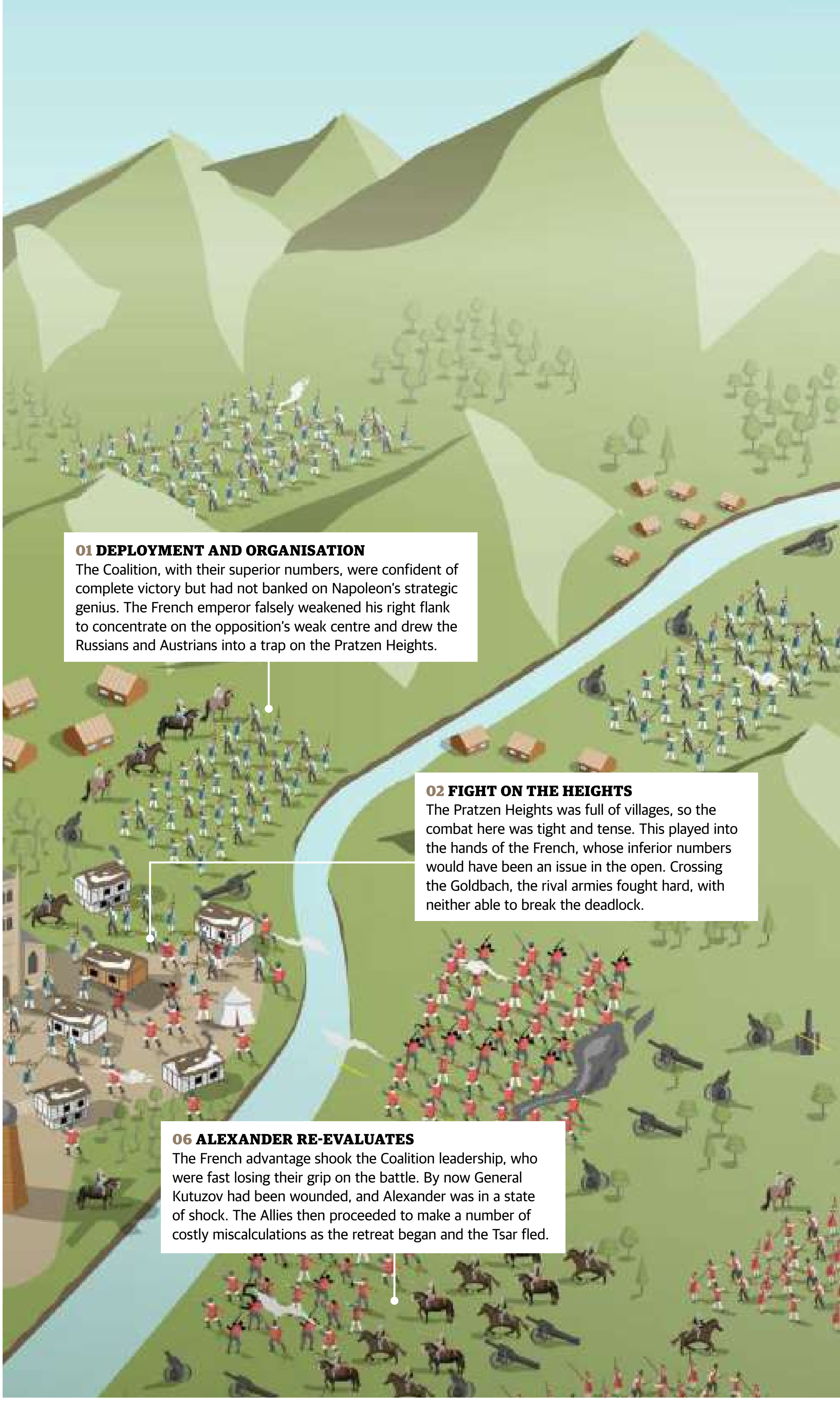
Napoleon's original plan had been scuppered by the enemy not moving their entire force from the centre, but he had other ways of gaining the upper hand. Led by General Davout, 4,300 men had been summoned by Napoleon to march 110 kilometres from Vienna to bolster the French forces. In one of history's closest shaves, they managed to complete their march in 48 hours and arrive just in time to strengthen the right flank, which was buckling under the Allied onslaught. In the shadow of the old fortress at Sokolnitz, the occupation of the heights changed hands frequently, but eventually Davout's men managed to end the stalemate and turn the tide to smash through the Allied ranks. Despite a short rally from the Austrian O'Reilly light cavalry, the Coalition troops began to flee. The battle had been turned on its head, and nearly all the Allied advances had been checked.

With the battle of the heights over, the conflict turned to the left and centre of the battlefield. An initial cavalry charge on the left flank saw horses from both sides slam into one another, while in the centre the Russian Imperial Guard careered into the French battalions as the Coalition rallied. 3,000 grenadiers broke the first French line and were only stopped after a timely artillery barrage. The Imperial Guard regrouped to allow their artillery to exact revenge and bombard the French, who had formed defensive squares on the battlefield. The Coalition cavalry then struck the weakened squares and captured what would be their only trophy from Austerlitz, the French Fourth Line's Eagle.

Napoleon, seeing that he was losing the fight for the centre ground, sent his own imperial guard into the fray, with emphatic results. Scattered after their initial success, the Russian Imperial Guard did not maintain their line and were easily picked off by the French counter-attack, boosted by the I Corps. The Allied centre crumbled under this hammer blow, but the battle for the left flank was still raging. The Allied formation was split into two and lacked a core. The French divisions could now outmanoeuvre the scattered Russians and Austrians and attack them from all sides.

As the battle raged into the afternoon, General Lannes, a courageous young Frenchman, went on the offensive to the north of the struggled in an attempt to strike down the Austrian divisions led by General Bagration. He almost succeeded but was foiled after a battery of Austrian artillery made a timely intervention. The Austrians were still pegged back but were not cut off from the rest of their force as Lannes had hoped.

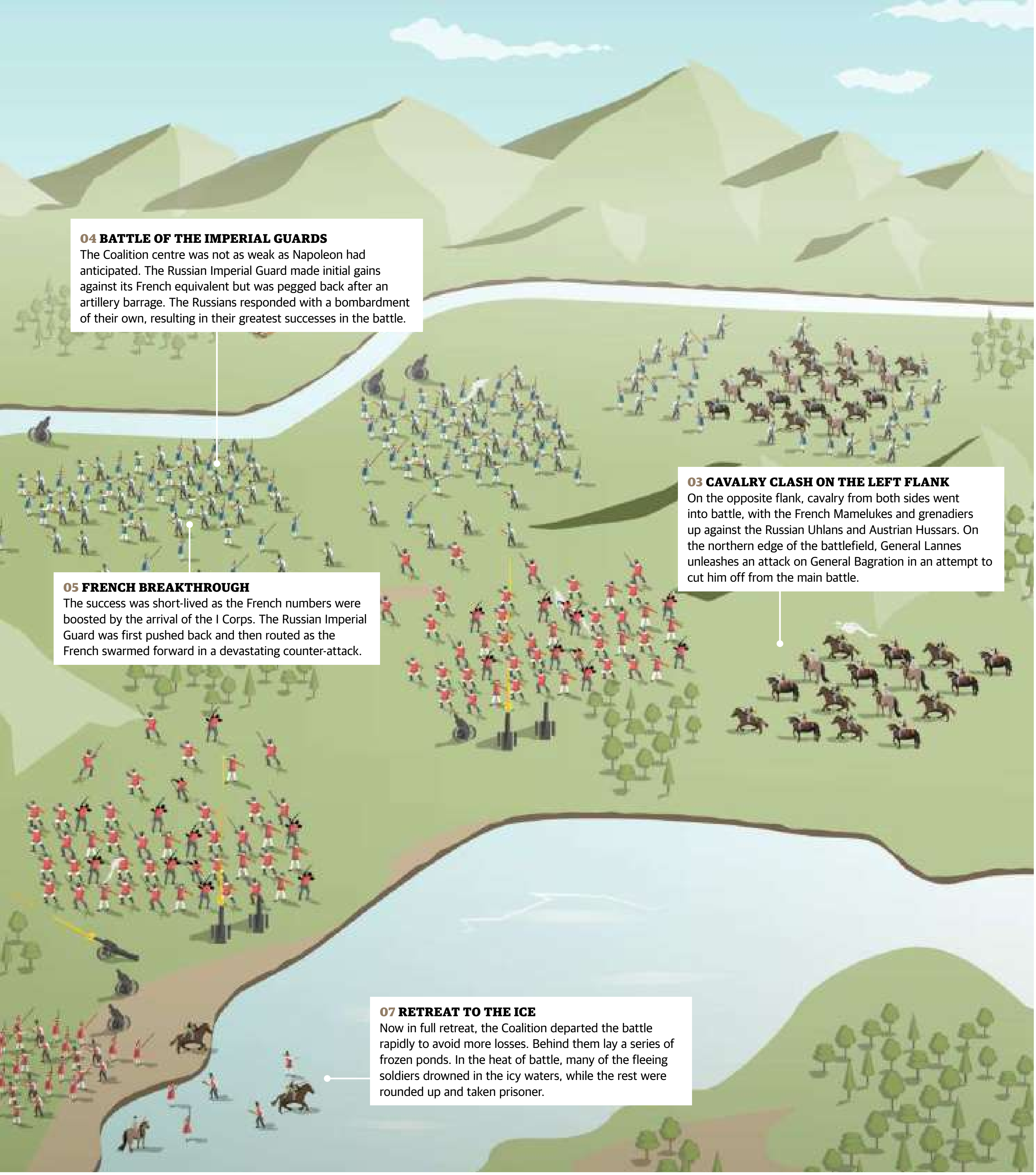
As Tsar Alexander took stock and analysed what had happened, he realised that the Coalition high command had been torn from the main army and



01 DEPLOYMENT AND ORGANISATION
The Coalition, with their superior numbers, were confident of complete victory but had not banked on Napoleon's strategic genius. The French emperor falsely weakened his right flank to concentrate on the opposition's weak centre and drew the Russians and Austrians into a trap on the Pratzen Heights.

02 FIGHT ON THE HEIGHTS
The Pratzen Heights was full of villages, so the combat here was tight and tense. This played into the hands of the French, whose inferior numbers would have been an issue in the open. Crossing the Goldbach, the rival armies fought hard, with neither able to break the deadlock.

06 ALEXANDER RE-EVALUATES
The French advantage shook the Coalition leadership, who were fast losing their grip on the battle. By now General Kutuzov had been wounded, and Alexander was in a state of shock. The Allies then proceeded to make a number of costly miscalculations as the retreat began and the Tsar fled.

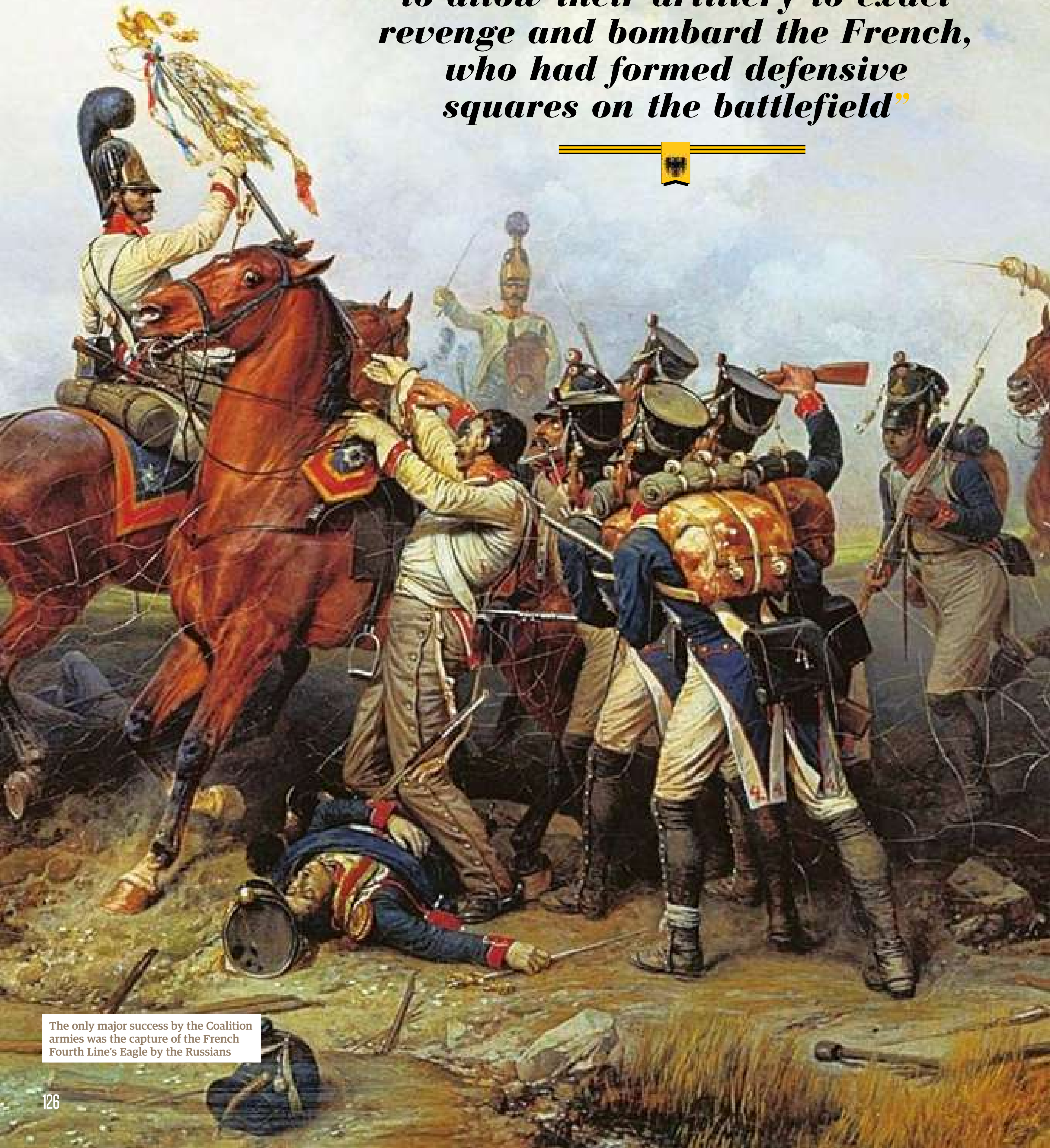


04 BATTLE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARDS
The Coalition centre was not as weak as Napoleon had anticipated. The Russian Imperial Guard made initial gains against its French equivalent but was pegged back after an artillery barrage. The Russians responded with a bombardment of their own, resulting in their greatest successes in the battle.

03 CAVALRY CLASH ON THE LEFT FLANK
On the opposite flank, cavalry from both sides went into battle, with the French Mamelukes and grenadiers up against the Russian Uhlans and Austrian Hussars. On the northern edge of the battlefield, General Lannes unleashes an attack on General Bagration in an attempt to cut him off from the main battle.

05 FRENCH BREAKTHROUGH
The success was short-lived as the French numbers were boosted by the arrival of the I Corps. The Russian Imperial Guard was first pushed back and then routed as the French swarmed forward in a devastating counter-attack.

07 RETREAT TO THE ICE
Now in full retreat, the Coalition departed the battle rapidly to avoid more losses. Behind them lay a series of frozen ponds. In the heat of battle, many of the fleeing soldiers drowned in the icy waters, while the rest were rounded up and taken prisoner.



> *“The Imperial Guard regrouped to allow their artillery to exact revenge and bombard the French, who had formed defensive squares on the battlefield”*

The only major success by the Coalition armies was the capture of the French Fourth Line’s Eagle by the Russians was unable to direct the battle effectively. Napoleon now had the upper hand.

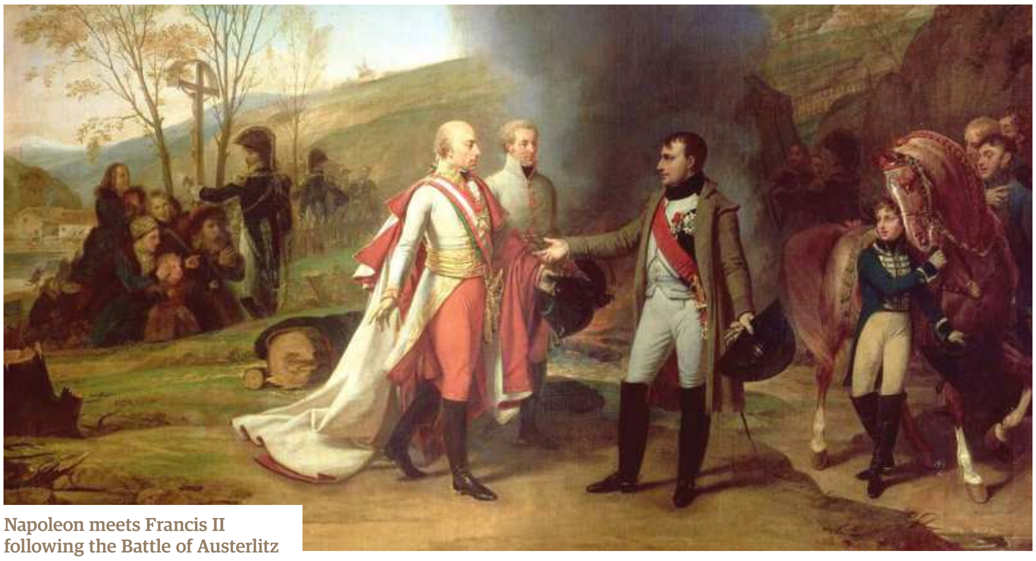
Return to the Heights

Back on the right flank, ferocious man-to-man fighting resulted in the French now occupying the heights, but they were unable to press home their advantage as the Coalition armies fought back bravely. Both sides were wielding primitive firearms, with the most popular being the .69-calibre smoothbore musket. This weapon was inaccurate and quite ineffective, with many shots not hitting the target, which sometimes resulted in friendly fire. This meant much of the battle was reduced to fierce hand-to-hand fighting.

With both bayonets and sabres being deployed, Austerlitz was a ferocious, bloody battle, with neither side holding back. The close-quarters combat was backed up by artillery barrages from both sides. Although the Allies had many more guns at their disposal, the organisation of the French troops meant their shots were more effective and frequent. This lack of cohesion in the Coalition ranks also meant that the powerful Austrian cavalry could not be utilised effectively and was often found too far to the rear to do any lasting damage to the French lines.

In the latter stages of the battle, the Tsar saw that victory was becoming more and more unlikely, so he fled the field. It was also at this time that General Kutuzov received a wound and had to be treated in the safety of a reserve unit. The Coalition was now leaderless and unable to co-ordinate effective attacks. An unsupported Russian Uhlan attack on the north flank that suffered 400 casualties demonstrated this.

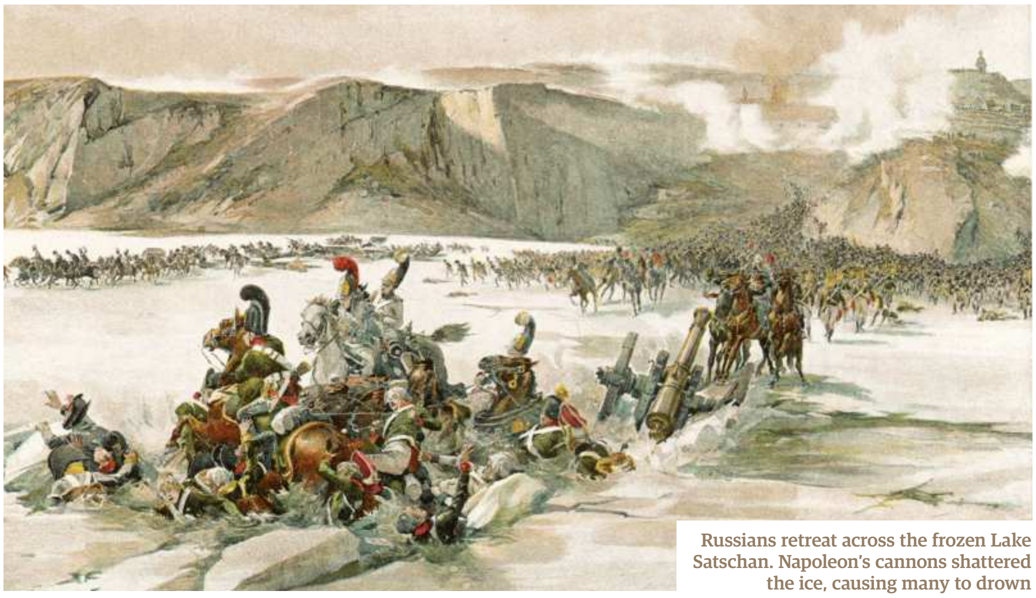
Behind the Russian and Austrian regiments lay a number of frozen ponds known as the Satschan Mere. As the French piled forward, the Allies had no option but to flee across the ice. Saddled with heavy artillery and the remaining horses, the winter lake could not hold the weight, and as the French drew near, many fell into the freezing water and became the victim of the sub-zero temperatures. The remainder of the troops were bombarded by artillery or taken prisoner as soon as they reached the lake's shores.


Napoleon meets Francis II following the Battle of Austerlitz

Contemporary accounts have claimed that the number of Allied deaths in the Satschan Mere were greatly exaggerated, but nonetheless the Coalition divisions were scattered and leaderless and defeat was now inevitable. 11,000 Russians and 4,000 Austrians lay dead in the mud as a victorious Grande Armée mopped up the remaining Coalition soldiers on the battlefield. 12,000 soldiers were captured, and the French helped themselves to 180 cannons from the Russian artillery. The weary French could now rest as the Russians retreated back to their homeland and the Austrians surrendered to them.

The Aftermath

Napoleon may not have defeated his adversaries as comprehensively as he would have liked, but he had out-thought and out-fought both the Austrians and Russians. However, his triumph was a double-edge sword: so great was his victory that some historians believe it caused Napoleon to lose touch with reality and begin to dream of a Napoleonic Europe.


Russians retreat across the frozen Lake Satschan. Napoleon's cannons shattered the ice, causing many to drown

On the evening of 2 December, Johann I Joseph, Prince of Liechtenstein, rode into the French encampment to negotiate a peace agreement. The hierarchy of the Grande Armée admitted him, and Napoleon and Francis met two days later. After extended discussions, the result was the fourth Peace of Pressburg. The treaty, signed on 26 December, was a necessity for Austria, who had seen its lands taken and its army destroyed. Austrian would ultimately fare much worse than any other nation and was forced to pay 40 million Francs in reparations Conversely, the agreement greatly benefitted the French First Republic.

Under its terms, France absorbed Trieste and Dalmatia into its ballooning sphere of influence, as well as a vast area east of the Rhine that bordered Bavarian and Prussian lands. Napoleon was keen to appease Prussia, so it did not enter a conflict with the French. As a result, he allowed his defeated foe free reign over Hanover.

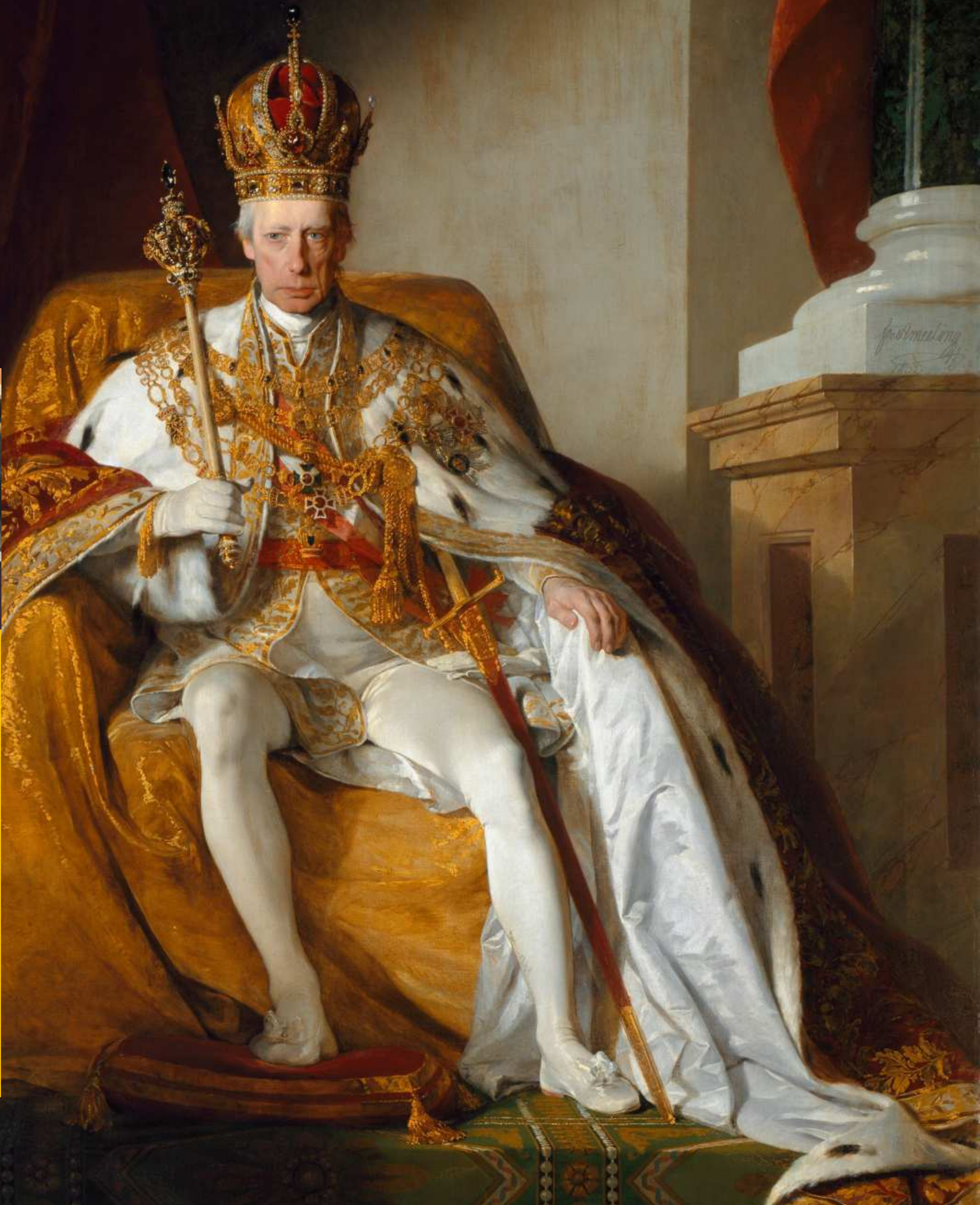
The most significant consequence of Napoleon's triumph at Austerlitz was the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. With Russia and Austria both soundly defeated in the field, the empire, a power that had ruled for over 1,000 years, was now powerless in the face of Napoleon's relentless imperial expansion. It was further depleted by the French emperor's creation of the Confederation of the Rhine, a cluster of German states formerly ruled by the Holy Roman Empire that now provided Napoleon with a buffer between France and Prussia.

The picture of post-Austerlitz Europe was a bleak one for all bar Napoleon. The Third Coalition was in ruins, and with the Russians out of the picture, only Britain remained in the self-proclaimed emperor's way. The peace did not last though; when the Prussians became more sceptical of the French in 1806, Europe was on the road to war once more.

SURVIVING 1806

We talk to an expert about the demise of the Holy Roman Empire and whether it could ever have been rebuilt

Written by Professor Peter H Wilson



Peter H Wilson

Brief Bio

Peter H Wilson is Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford, a Fellow of All Souls College and Principal Investigator of a five-year research project on the 'European Fiscal-Military System 1530-1870' funded by the European Research Council. His books have been translated into Chinese, German, Italian, Polish, Macedonian and Japanese and include *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* (Penguin/Harvard UP, 2016), and *Europe's Tragedy: A History of the Thirty Years War* (Penguin/Harvard UP, 2009) which won the Society for Military History's Distinguished Book Award. His latest book, *Lützen*, was published in 2018 by Oxford University Press in its *Great Battles* series.

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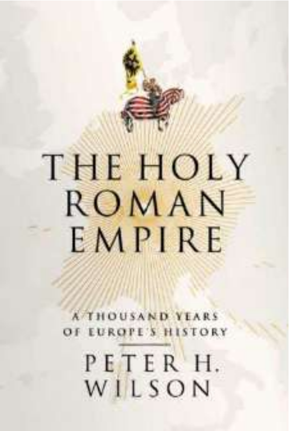

When did the empire's decline begin? Was there a specific event that in hindsight proved to be the point of no return?
The empire's history is generally written as one of terminal decline from at least 1648, if not already from the demise of the Staufer around 1250. The idea of 'decline' assumes degeneration from a 'complete' or at least better condition to a worse one. In the empire's case, this is usually presented as a descent from a centralised state to a decentralised, fragmented one. Yet Charlemagne's regime was never centralised, and it is better to see the empire's history as a succession of different forms of imperial rule in which the emperor's power waxed and waned. In terms of 'decline' relative to the empire's end in 1806, we can identify a succession of significant stages, which, while not predetermining an inevitable end, nonetheless mark points at which it became progressively more difficult to sustain the established hierarchical political order. The first of these stages occurred around 1740 when the Habsburgs lost control of the imperial title for the first and only time since 1438 and which coincided with the brief but disastrous interlude of weak Wittelsbach imperial rule and the onset of open Austro-Prussian rivalry.

How important was the rivalry between Austria and Prussia in deciding the fate of the empire?
Absolutely crucial. Since the development of Luxembourg imperial rule (1312-1437), the empire had been a hierarchy of princes and cities governed by the family controlling the largest block of hereditary possessions. This became even more pronounced when the Habsburgs occupied this exclusive premier position as they directly controlled a third of the empire. The growth of Austria as a distinct European power through the reconquest of Hungary after 1683 increased the material underpinnings of Habsburg imperial rule.

By contrast, Prussia's rise changed the empire's internal dynamic by adding a second German power, particularly once the ruling Hohenzollerns secured international recognition as 'kings in Prussia' after 1700. Whereas the Habsburgs had seen off previous challengers, they were unable to cut Prussia down to size during the Seven Years' War (1756–63). Prussia's survival in that conflict established it as one of Europe's great powers. The remaining principalities and cities were reduced to a 'third Germany' overshadowed by Austria and Prussia. Whereas the smaller territories had accounted for over a third of German military strength in 1740, the combined size of Austrian and Prussian forces was six times that of all the other armies by 1790. While the Hohenzollerns had no desire to displace the Habsburgs as emperors, they could certainly frustrate Habsburg imperial rule. Worse, the 'third Germany' stood no chance of reforming the empire against Habsburg or Hohenzollern opposition. The empire's vulnerability was exposed when Prussia unilaterally withdrew from the war against Revolutionary France in 1795, taking northern Germany with it.

Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz is widely cited as the death knell for the empire. Why was defeat at Austerlitz fatal to the empire? Could it have been avoided?
That is certainly the case. Prussia's withdrawal from the war in 1795 effectively partitioned the empire and left Austria to fight on aided only by Bavaria and the small south German principalities. Though the Habsburgs desperately wanted to retain their exclusive imperial status, they were forced to accept Napoleon's declaration of himself as Emperor of the French in 1804.

To ensure parity, they created their own Austrian hereditary imperial title. Forced on the defensive, Austria increasingly disregarded the established norms of consensual imperial politics and ruthlessly bullied the weaker princes and cities, some of whom began to view Napoleon more as a potential protector than a threat. Austerlitz shattered Austria's remaining influence in southern Germany, particularly as the Habsburgs were forced to recognise Napoleon's gift of sovereign titles to key princes, thereby challenging the continuation of imperial jurisdiction. Meanwhile, Napoleon's creation of a new kingdom of Italy severed that country's traditional links to the empire. As it became obvious that Napoleon planned to usurp the Holy Roman imperial tradition to assist his reorganisation of Germany, Francis II reluctantly abdicated and formally dissolved the empire, having ensured the imperial regalia had been safely evacuated beforehand to Hungary. The only way to have avoided that would have been to fight France, which Austria was in no condition to do in 1806.

Why wasn't there a concerted effort to reform the empire in the aftermath of Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815? Would a reformation ever have been possible?
This is a good question, because many indeed mourned the empire's dissolution in 1806. The King of Sweden, who still ruled western Pomerania as part of the empire, issued a declaration stating that he refused to recognise the empire had been dissolved, while the British Government was also not averse to some kind of restoration, because this appeared the best way to recover Hanover. Napoleon frustrated all efforts to give the Confederation of the Rhine a workable constitution, because he feared this would undermine his control over his German satellite states. As these began to switch sides during 1813, a revival of the empire became more likely. Nonetheless, those who had benefited from the changes after 1802 refused to relinquish their gains, so the minor counts and princes petitioning the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 stood no chance of full restitution.

Moreover, Britain and Russia wanted to ensure an adequate buffer against France and so agreed to Prussia's annexation of northwestern Germany, thereby further reducing the 'third Germany' that had been so essential to the traditional political structure. However, no one could think of anything radically different.

If the empire had survived, how do you think this would have shaped Europe?
There are several historians who have presented the 18th-century empire as a strong, progressive federal state that supposedly prefigured the European Union only to be thwarted by the dastardly Prussians (or French, depending on viewpoint). That is an exaggeration. The empire had survived for so long by managing gradual change, but there were clear signs that the existing structures were becoming increasingly inflexible.

Crucially, the hierarchical political order was closely entwined with a vision of society divided into corporate groups, primarily clergy, nobility and commons. However, demographic growth since the 1730s, combined with slow yet profound economic changes, had transformed society, creating new tensions that established institutions, like the imperial supreme courts, were finding hard to resolve. These tensions would eventually erupt in the 1830 and 1848 revolutions. While the old order might have coped with these events, it is questionable whether it could have contained continued Austro-Prussian rivalry, which would cause the demise of the German Confederation and partition of Central Europe in 1866.

What is the legacy of the Holy Roman Empire?
Mixed. In the broader popular consciousness, the empire is a byword for disunity and political weakness. Most Germans still see it as 'their' past and blame the empire for not becoming a nation state. Other countries all have their own national stories centred around sovereign independence. For them also, the empire seems 'German' and thus too alien to be part of their own history, except briefly for France (because Charlemagne was, of course, 'French'). However, if we look beyond these narrow stories, we see a more interesting picture of just how interconnected Europe's history has been.

Finally, understanding the empire helps us to ask better questions about the present. Nationalist and populist movements are currently so strong because sovereignty is so weak and continues to weaken through globalisation and other factors beyond the control of individual states.

Sovereignty in the empire was always fragmented, and its politics involved balancing competing interests without a strong, coercive government. It still has much to tell us today.

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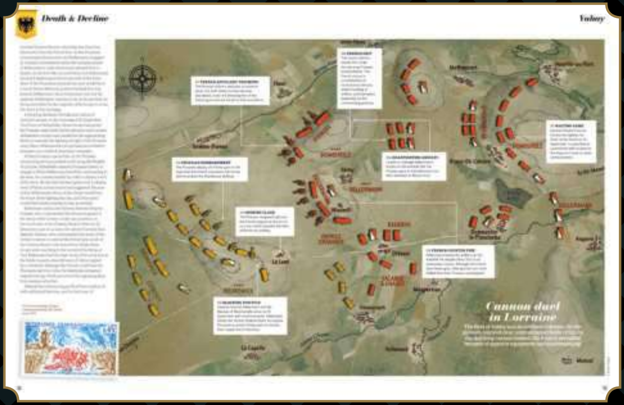

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